

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT OF INAUGURAL MEETING OF TRACK II
NETWORK OF ASEAN DEFENCE AND SECURITY INSTITUTIONS**

(NADI)

23-24 AUGUST 2007, SINGAPORE

Introduction

The inaugural meeting of the Track II Network of ASEAN Defence and Security Institutions which was organized by S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, was held at Marina Mandarin Hotel from 23-24 August 2007.

Representatives of Asean defence and security think-tanks and defence ministry institutions attended the inaugural meeting. The list of representatives of ASEAN think-tanks and defence ministry institutions is attached at Annex A. The meeting was chaired by Ambassador Barry Desker, Dean RSIS.

Adoption of Agenda

The meeting adopted the agenda which is appended at Annex B.

Chairman's welcome address

In his welcome address, Ambassador Barry Desker welcomed and thanked all the Asean think-tanks' representatives and representatives of defence ministry institutions attending the meeting. Ambassador Desker outlined the regional security outlook and urged the representatives of Asean think-tanks to frankly exchange views on this topic and on the prospects for Asean defence and

security cooperation as well as to discuss the relevance of the establishment of the Track II Network of Asean Defence and Security Institutions to serve as a forum to build confidence and familiarity among the ASEAN think-tanks, and recommend fresh ideas and proposals for enhancing defence and security cooperation to the ASEAN Defence Senior Officials' Meeting (ADSOM) for consideration.

Exchange of views on regional security outlook

The representatives of the Asean think-tanks and defence ministry institutions have had a useful and extensive exchange of views on the current regional political and security situation. With the rise of China and India, and with Russia and Japan asserting themselves on the world stage, a new political and security architecture was evolving in the region. The US as the dominant external military power will continue to assert an influence in the region, with China and India playing increasingly important roles. ASEAN is well positioned to work together to foster peace, security, stability and the development of the region.

The Asean think-tanks and defence ministry institutions highlighted that while there was peace and stability in the East Asia region, there still remained many challenges faced by regional states especially the members of Asean, in the traditional and non-traditional security sectors. The latter would be a new focus of military activities as it is not envisaged that there will be inter-state wars or confrontation in the Asean region in the immediate future. In this new environment, civil-military relations will be an increasingly important factor as the new challenges facing Asean societies require a “whole of society” approach to handling emerging problems. Many of these issues are transnational and transboundary in nature. Increasingly, what is required is not just a concerted

and co-operative response amongst the Asean countries, but a framework that allows countries outside ASEAN to contribute constructively to a safe and stable region, in accordance with the principles of non-interference and non-intervention, equality and mutual benefit.

Prospects for ASEAN defence and security cooperation

The meeting recognised the need for Asean defence and security cooperation to meet a new series of non-traditional and transnational security challenges. The meeting also recognised that extra-regional countries have a role to play, given their wealth of expertise and experience in these operations. The Asean think-tanks and defence ministry institutions believed that there were prospects for cooperation among the Asean countries and extra-regional countries and that the militaries and security agencies of the Asean countries could play a significant role in helping to manage these transnational non-traditional security issues, taking into consideration the varying capabilities and capacities of member states. The meeting agreed that the production of an annual ASEAN Security Outlook analysing these issues (proposed by the first ADMM) could be a contribution of Track II to the ADMM process. The Track II process could play a significant role in interacting with Track III such as civil society groups and NGOs, from within Asean and outside the region, to facilitate enhanced cooperation.

The meeting recognized the significant role of the Asean militaries in ensuring maritime security in the region. In the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, the Asean militaries could work out further information sharing procedures to enhance closer cooperation and coordination in ensuring maritime security, complementing existing arrangements for security cooperation in the Straits. As these issues are of great interest and a challenge to other regional countries and

other user states outside the region, the Asean militaries could consider enhancing current table-top exercises with these countries to tap their expertise and assistance to implement effective measures for the security of the Straits and safe passage of goods and energy through the region.

The Asean think-tanks and defence ministry institutions also agreed that close consultation on the threat of regional terrorism was essential. They noted the increasing cooperation in this area and highlighted the risk to regional security arising from transnational terrorism as well as separatist conflicts.

In future meetings, the Asean think-tanks and defence ministry institutions could discuss other areas of cooperation. These may include exchanges of teaching staff, curriculum and academic discourse on current comprehensive security issues. The Asean Track II Network of Asean Defence and Security Institutions therefore has a significant role to play in fostering familiarity and comfort between the ASEAN think-tanks, as well as exploring new ideas for cooperation among the militaries of the ASEAN countries. One such idea could be the impact of cyber-conflict.

Recommendation to establish a Track II Network of ASEAN Defence and Security Institutions

The representatives of the Asean think-tanks and defence ministry institutions exchanged views on the relevance of a Track II network of Asean defence and security institutions. They concluded that such a Track II Network of Asean Defence and Security Institutions would be a relevant and useful forum in the ongoing process of creating an ASEAN Security Community.

The meeting therefore recommends to the ADSOM for the ADMM to endorse and support the establishment of a Track II Network of Asean Defence and Security Institutions (NADI). The Track II Network meeting would promote dialogue between the ASEAN Defence and Security institutions and could provide the ASEAN defence track with fresh ideas. The meeting's reports could be surfaced to the ADSOM for information.

The host of the Asean Track II Network meeting will rotate in alphabetical order. The Asean country hosting the Track II network will coincide with the ASEAN country hosting the ADMM. However, if the Asean country hosting the ADMM does not have a Track II defence and security institution, it can be decided by mutual agreement of the ASEAN countries, that another Asean country host the Track II network meeting. The host of the Track II network meeting will provide conference facilities and hotel accommodation for one participant during its meeting but the Asean think-tanks' representatives attending the meeting will have to bear their own airfares. The Track II Network could consider meeting at the plenary level once a year. A small number of working groups could be established to meet between annual plenary meetings. These working groups would prepare reports and assessments for the consideration of the annual plenary meetings.

The meeting took note of the role of RSIS in initiating the inaugural meeting of NADI and proposed that RSIS should serve as the secretariat of NADI.

Concluding Remarks

The representatives of the Asean think-tanks and defence ministry institutions expressed their sincere appreciation to the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, for the warm hospitality and the

excellent arrangements for the inaugural informal meeting of the Track II Network of Asean Defence and Security Institutions meeting.

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