

**OPENING REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR BARRY DESKER
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**The 2nd Track II Network of ASEAN Defence and Security Institute Meeting
(NADI)
3 November 2008**

Major General Wisith Jeangprajak

Director of the Strategic Research Institute

Members of NADI

Distinguished guests

I would like to thank MG Wisith for inviting me to attend this second meeting of the Track II Network of ASEAN Defence and Security Institutions (NADI). It is also my pleasure to accept your invitation to make these opening remarks at this second NADI meeting on behalf of the NADI Secretariat.

The Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, RSIS, took the initiative to inaugurate the NADI meeting in Singapore in August last year. We believe that the establishment of NADI would be timely and necessary to bring policy analysts specializing in defence issues, academics researching security cooperation, and defence officials together to discuss issues of security cooperation that the ASEAN Summit and the ASEAN Defence Ministers had raised. The ASEAN Defence Senior Officials Meeting (ADSOM) in October last year after considering the NADI Chairman's Report, acknowledged that NADI was a useful forum to build confidence and familiarity among the ASEAN think-tanks and institutions and to provide the ASEAN defence track with fresh ideas. ADSOM decided to place NADI's report in its formal agenda in future.

We believe that the informal and unofficial Track II platform can offer a more conducive environment for a free discussion of defence and security cooperation in ASEAN than the formal structure of an official meeting. Ideas and proposals that may be deemed too sensitive to be formally tabled at an official Track I meeting can be informally raised and debated at a Track II meeting. Our defence officials would face time constraints within their tight schedules to discuss details of certain matters like the production of an ASEAN Annual Security Outlook. NADI can provide useful inputs in terms of the scope and contents of such an Annual Security Outlook and could undertake this task as our contribution to the ADMM process. NADI can also contribute by thinking ahead of the curve and anticipate possible security challenges, address emerging issues in security cooperation as well as think of new ideas and recommendations for cooperation, which would be relevant and timely for ADSOM and the ASEAN Defence Track to consider.

At this meeting, NADI would exchange views on the regional security and political outlook. We will discuss challenges facing the region with regard to both traditional and non-traditional security issues. I share MG Wisith's view that we should discuss the roles that ASEAN militaries can play in non-traditional security challenges, also known as Operations Other Than War (OOTW). NADI will also discuss prospects for ASEAN defence and security cooperation and make recommendations to ADSOM for cooperation. We will focus our discussion on challenges to ASEAN security and what measures to consider for closer cooperation in managing these challenges. Areas of emphasis could include closer ASEAN military's cooperation to ensure maritime security in the region, disaster relief and emergency operations for humanitarian assistance. We could also discuss the various ways, whether through workshops, seminars or table-top exercises, to facilitate closer cooperation. NADI may give thought to the possible establishment of an ASEAN disaster monitoring and coordination centre for non-traditional security issues. NADI could also think ahead on enhancing the role of ASEAN militaries in crisis management, both within and outside the region. It is my hope that NADI will also discuss the publication of the ASEAN Annual Security Outlook and

provide ideas for such a publication in terms of scope, content, format, inputs and contribution from ASEAN think-tanks. We could also have a preliminary discussion on NADI's possible role in the future ADMM-Plus process.

I observe that many of the participants are from the defence ministry and defence research institutes. I hope that for this meeting you will participate in your personal capacity so as to allow us to think innovatively about defence and security issues well beyond the government position in order to throw out new ideas and recommendations which will be useful to the ASEAN Defence Track and the ADMM process.

I am also pleased that at this meeting there are representatives from the various Thai universities and other civil society organizations which are interested in defence and security issues and can contribute ideas to the NADI discussions. It is in our interest that we engage those outside NADI, and broaden the range of insights and analytical perspectives for our NADI meetings.

May I take this opportunity to thank MG Wisith Jeangprajak for the excellent arrangements for this meeting and for the general hospitality accorded to us.

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