

# **DISCUSSION PAPER ON PRINCIPLES FOR ASEAN DEFENCE AND SECURITY COOPERATION**

## **Introduction**

1. The ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) has made significant strides in promoting dialogue and practical cooperation since it was established in 2006. This has contributed to regional peace, security and stability, which are necessary conditions for strong economic growth and vibrant communities in ASEAN.

2. Under the ADMM framework, we have embarked on cooperation to build confidence and capacities in domains which include humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), peacekeeping, defence industry, and crisis management hotlines. Deeper cooperation to build capacity and to address shared security challenges can be expected in support of building a strong ASEAN Community.

3. In pursuing cooperation, the ADMM has been guided by principles enshrined in two major instruments, namely the ASEAN Charter and Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC). The principles that are especially pertinent to ASEAN defence establishments include:

- a. Respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity of all ASEAN Member States;
- b. Shared commitment and collective responsibility in enhancing regional peace, security, and prosperity;
- c. Renunciation of aggression and of the threat or use of force or other actions in any manner inconsistent with international law;
- d. Non-interference in the internal affairs of ASEAN Member States;
- e. Upholding the United Nations Charter and international law; and
- f. The centrality of ASEAN in its external engagement while remaining actively engaged, outward-looking, inclusive and non-discriminatory.

## **Purpose**

4. On the occasion of the ADMM's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it is timely to review the ADMM's progress. Even as we explore how the ADMM can support ASEAN Community building efforts, we should ensure that initiatives the ADMM undertakes are carefully deliberated and well-implemented. Cooperation must be able to accommodate the different political systems and cultures, developmental stages, commitments, and socio-economic conditions of respective ASEAN Member States. We should ensure that cooperation moves at a pace comfortable to all, and we do not inadvertently put ASEAN Member States in difficult positions, particularly on issues that are politically sensitive. Given limited resources, cooperation must also be beneficial to ASEAN and be sustainable. ASEAN's credibility would be undermined if the implementation is unsuccessful or not followed through.

## **Principles for ASEAN Defence and Security Cooperation**

5. It is useful to develop a set of key principles that the ADMM can readily reference to guide ASEAN defence and security cooperation. This paper posits four principles for cooperation which have been raised by ASEAN Member States since the ADMM's establishment.

a. **Respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of each ASEAN Member State as we build the ASEAN Community.** Each ASEAN Member State will decide on its own participation in missions and activities. ASEAN Member States will also retain full national command and control of their participating forces and assets. Forces should only be deployed to the host nation at its explicit request or agreement, on a case-by-case basis.

b. **Participation shall be on a voluntary, non-binding, and flexible basis.** Participation must respect the national considerations of each ASEAN Member State. Such a modality allows ASEAN Member States to observe the rights and obligations under any existing agreements to which they are parties to, and accommodates their individual comfort levels with regard to the initiative.

c. **Cooperation shall be open, inclusive, and in accordance with the ASEAN Charter.** Contemporary security challenges involve multiple stakeholders. An open and inclusive regional

security architecture allows ASEAN to partner with appropriate regional and international organisations and entities to effectively address these challenges.

d. **Cooperation shall be in accordance with international law and the ASEAN Charter.** These instruments provide the foundation for important norms and protocols such as the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea, which was developed in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

6. As cooperation in ASEAN expands, there will be issues that cut across the different ASEAN sectoral bodies. The ADMM's consent must be sought for proposals from other ASEAN sectoral bodies that impact ASEAN defence and security cooperation. Doing so ensures that proposals for ASEAN defence and security cooperation are in line with the principles listed at paragraph 5, thereby preserving the ADMM's credibility.

## **Conclusion**

7. The ADMM has done well and will continue to progress. As set forth in the Protocol to the Concept Paper for the Establishment of the ADMM, the ADSOM shall ensure that defence and security cooperation adds value to achieving the fundamental objectives of ASEAN and complements the work of other ASEAN ministerial bodies and sectoral organisations. The ASEAN Charter, TAC, and other ASEAN instruments as well as the four principles put forth above shall guide the ADSOM in shaping ASEAN defence and security cooperation.

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