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**12TH ASEAN MILITARY
INTELLIGENCE
INFORMAL MEETING**

*Vientiane Lao, PDR
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**ENHANCING ASEAN MILITARY INTELLIGENCE COOPERATION FOR
ASEAN COMMUNITY BUILDING**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

Mr Chairman, Brigadier General Thongvanh Chantavong, Director
General of Military Intelligence Department,

My esteemed counterparts,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

A very good morning to you all.

Firstly, thank you to our gracious hosts for the kind invitation to
be in your serene country. This is my first time in Laos and the warm
hospitality accorded to me has made this visit all the more pleasant.

This is the first year of our ASEAN Community and I believe this gives a new injection of momentum to our meeting this year.

Dear friends and colleagues,

It is crucial to take stock of where we stand today in order to prepare for where we stand tomorrow.

Our reality right now reflects the strength of the regional security cooperation, with a relatively stable environment in Southeast Asia. Yet, a considerable number of new and sophisticated threats have also emerged, undergirding the importance for our intelligence community to ensure the fluidity of disseminating relevant information to our clients in a timely manner.

Our effectiveness in guaranteeing this fluidity will ultimately be contingent on our networks, the extent, breadth, and depth of our information-sharing. These metrics of our intelligence capabilities and effort are in no small part attributed to platforms such as AMIIM itself.

I have enjoyed the privilege of witnessing AMIIM and ACDFIM grow as platforms that continue to facilitate and build this cooperation since my first participation, back in 2010.

Even in recent years, AMIIM and ACDFIM have matured substantively, as evident from the constant iteration of our commitment. On a tangible level, this commitment is manifest in the proposals and implementation of initiatives that have come about.

One such initiative that must be lauded is the strengthening of our intelligence analyst network. Just last year, the ASEAN Militaries Analyst-to-Analyst Intelligence Exchange (AMAAIE) was formalised as an annual activity. This pledge of continuity amplifies the spirit of intelligence sharing that must permeate not just among the top ranks, but through all levels of our organisations. Enabling this network of partnerships to flourish is critical, given the demand for intelligence analysis in an age of information abundance and the consequent role that intelligence analysis plays in the strategic policymaking process.

My friends and counterparts,

Forming these multiple layers of intelligence networks may appear to you as simply gradual growth. However, it is these incremental acts that form the habits of cooperation necessary to strengthen our ASEAN community.

The imperative to upgrade our level of cooperation in the realm of information-sharing is more pertinent in the light of the transnational and more fluid nature of non-conventional threats, such as terrorism, maritime security, and cyber-security.

The similar topography of threats faced by our region can be traced into geographic factors, such as the importance of maritime security for the majority of littoral states, or regional threat spillovers, such as Daesh's aspiration to spread terror to all corners of the globe. These threats thus pose the question of how our information-sharing networks can be further integrated.

For instance, within the field of cyber-security alone, we are witness to two key developments. The first is a cyberspace that is continuously expanding, becoming increasingly vulnerable, and hosting higher amounts and various types of often-critical data.

The second key development points to a growth in the number of actors abusing the cyberspace for criminal or malicious purposes. Within the lens of conventional threats, these individuals would be considered non-combatants, but with their capability and actions, they are able to wage a form of covert electronic warfare. The quick march of technological evolution may also spread into other fields, such as counterterrorism. The possibility of terrorists developing an all-digital virtual currency of their own weakens another channel for exercising our counterterrorism efforts. The military, as an institution that evolves to address both contemporary and upcoming threats, must anticipate the behavior of these threat actors.

In order to counter such forces, we can either improve internally, by recruiting professional talent as part of our countering efforts, though this has proven to be a costly endeavor given talent scarcity. Or we can opt to improve externally, by enhancing information-sharing and cooperation among the relevant institutions. The importance of this counter mechanism cannot be stated enough, as it would allow us to discover vulnerabilities quicker and mitigate threats through the sharing of defence measures and best practices.

How, then, do we translate this need to enhance our intelligence-sharing networks in the context of AMIIM? In addition to moving forward with existing initiatives, we can concentrate efforts into materialising new proposals and improving our processes internally.

One such effort includes the implementation for a more structured ideation-to-implementation process for AMIIM and ACDFIM. This would involve building, within our exchanges, the process for taking an idea or a proposal into conception and implementation, with clear communication among relevant actors to guarantee precise lines of accountability.

Another initiative in line with enhancing our information-sharing is the “365-online platform”, which will enable real-time intelligence sharing through a collective database and interactive network. The vision of this platform was a product of the collaborative effort among our analysts during AMAAIE in 2015 and would include

features such as a database on terrorist groups, watchlist, social media feeds, and enabled interactivity through chatrooms and Requests For Information (RFIs). The platform has come about as a means to address the lack of regularity and institutionalisation of information-sharing everyday throughout every year, and speaks volumes about the collective strength and higher aspirations of our intelligence analyst network.

While logistical and budgetary challenges may compound its development, we are slowly but surely moving towards realising it in order to take our cooperation to the next level.

However, we must keep in mind that information-sharing should not only be confined to the realm of security threats. The cooperation can expand to fit the purpose of increasing trust and avoiding misinterpretation of intent among our internal defence forces development in order to increase collective trust and avoid misinterpretation of intent.

Indeed, information-sharing in this domain could achieve these purposes without compromising the regional security balance. For instance, the sharing of military intelligence can facilitate us to identify the trends and analyse the gravity of traditional and non-traditional threats, allowing countries to enhance military capabilities and deterrence in accordance with current needs and in anticipation of future ones. These assessments would help point to when we need

to rebalance our acquisitions focus to combatting non-traditional threats. As such, enhanced information-sharing in this realm will fundamentally feed into our collective responsiveness and readiness.

As flexible state institutions, the military needs to be ready and equipped to counter these threats before or as they occur in real time.

Dear friends and counterparts,

Before I conclude today, I express my hope that the effort to enhance the depth and quality of our intelligence networks will continue and advance. A truly integrated network would only further add to the internal cohesion within ASEAN. It is clear that everyone is working towards the same goal of achieving peace and stability for our nations and for the region. Ultimately, our cohesion can only reap benefits in advancing the progress and security of our nations.

Thank You.