CONCEPT PAPER ON REVIEW OF FREQUENCY OF ASEAN DEFENCE MINISTERS’ MEETING-PLUS (ADMM-PLUS) MEETINGS

Introduction

1. At the Second, Third and Fourth ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting (herein after referred to as “ADMM”), the ASEAN Defence Ministers approved the Concept Papers related to the establishment of the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting-Plus (herein after referred to as “ADMM-Plus”), namely the ADMM-Plus Concept Paper (2007); ADMM-Plus: Principles for Membership (2009); ADMM-Plus: Configuration and Composition (2010); ADMM-Plus: Modalities and Procedures (2010); and the Attachment Paper to the “ADMM-Plus: Modalities and Procedures” (2010).

2. The establishment of the ADMM-Plus on 12 October 2010 is a significant milestone in ASEAN history. The ADMM-Plus brings together the ten ASEAN Member States and eight Dialogue Partners, namely Australia, the People’s Republic of China, the Republic of India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, the Russian Federation, and the United States of America (herein after referred to as the “Plus” Countries).

3. The ADMM-Plus is a key component of a robust, effective, open and inclusive regional security architecture. The ADMM-Plus enhances friendship, mutual trust and confidence through regular dialogue and concrete cooperation among the ADMM-Plus defence establishments. At the inaugural ADMM-Plus meeting in Hanoi in 2010, the Defence Ministers agreed that the second ADMM-Plus meeting will be convened in Brunei Darussalam in 2013. The ADMM-Plus also decided that the ASEAN Defence Senior Officials’ Meeting-Plus (herein after referred to as “ADSOM-Plus”) shall be convened on an annual basis to carry out activities of cooperation within the framework of the ADMM-Plus. The ADSOM-Plus shall be supported by the ADSOM-Plus Working Group.

4. Pursuant to the direction of the ADMM Retreat in Bali in October 2011, this paper reviews the frequency of the ADMM-Plus meetings and should be read in conjunction with the earlier adopted papers mentioned above. This paper also outlines the rationale and implications of this change.
Review of the ADMM-Plus

5. Both the Concept Papers on ADMM-Plus: Principles and Membership (2009) and ADMM-Plus: Modalities and Procedures (2010) articulate that the ADMM-Plus shall be held once in three years. The Concept Papers also state that the frequency of the meetings can be revised when the ADMM deems the need to increase interactions with the ADMM-Plus countries. Retreats, special or emergency meetings of the ADMM-Plus may also be held as necessary.

6. This paper proposes shortening the interval of ADMM-Plus meetings so that the Defence Ministers of ASEAN and the Plus Countries would meet more regularly. This allows the Defence Ministers of the ADMM-Plus countries to have more frequent exchanges of views and perspectives on geo-strategic, security and defence issues. It provides the Defence Ministers with more opportunities to discuss and identify security challenges, prioritise the ADMM-Plus' cooperative areas, and task the Senior Officials to implement the agreements and decisions of the ADMM-Plus.

7. Increasing the frequency of ADMM-Plus meetings would also foster greater momentum in cooperation and reinforce the positive commitment of ADMM-Plus countries to enhance regional peace and stability in a cooperative manner. This would increase mutual understanding and cohesion among ADMM-Plus countries and increase their capacity to work together constructively in response to the changing geo-strategic landscape. It also enables the five Experts’ Working Groups (EWGs) to report their respective progress to the Defence Ministers through the ADSOM-Plus and for the Defence Ministers to provide guidance on their areas of work more regularly.

8. Separately, ASEAN is encouraged by the significant contributions of the Plus countries to the peace, stability, and development of Southeast Asia and their aspiration to enhance cooperation with ASEAN through the ADMM-Plus. ASEAN further acknowledges that the Plus countries are keen to increase their engagement with ASEAN in the area of defence and security cooperation through the ADMM-Plus framework.

9. In this regard, the ADMM’s proactive approach in reviewing the frequency of ADMM-Plus meetings underscores the principle of ASEAN centrality in the ADMM-Plus process. It also shows that the ADMM-Plus is an integral part of the ADMM that can contribute positively to the realisation of an ASEAN Political-Security Community by 2015.
New Meeting Modality

10. This paper recommends that the ADMM-Plus shall meet once every two years. This arrangement will commence following the ADMM-Plus in 2013. The third ADMM-Plus shall thereby take place in 2015. Subject to further discussions, the frequency of the meetings can be further revised. The frequency of ADSOM-Plus and ADSOM-Plus Working Group will remain unchanged.

11. In line with Art 31(2)(d) of the ASEAN Charter for a single ASEAN Chairmanship and previously adopted ADMM-Plus concept papers, the chairmanship of the ADMM-Plus shall follow the chairmanship of the ADMM. We note that a two-year cycle would rotate the ADMM-Plus Chairmanship amongst only five ASEAN Member States in a steady state. Based on a two-year cycle, an ASEAN Member State will chair the ADMM-Plus meeting for a second time starting from 2021. To ensure that all ASEAN Member States have the opportunity to host the ADMM-Plus meeting, the ADMM could consider the appropriate modality before 2021 for the ADMM-Plus Chairmanship to be rotated to the other ASEAN Member States that did not chair the ADMM-Plus between 2013 and 2019.

Benefits

12. Convening the ADMM-Plus meeting once every two years has the following advantages:

a. Afford the Defence Ministers the opportunity to review the progress of ADMM-Plus cooperative activities more regularly;

b. Enable more frequent high-level dialogue to address current and emerging security challenges of mutual concern; and

c. Demonstrate an increased high-level commitment to the practical aims of ADMM-Plus to build ASEAN’s capacity, promote mutual trust and confidence, and enhance regional peace and stability.

Conclusion

13. It is recommended that the ADMM-Plus meets once every two years. The ADMM-Plus is an important component of the regional security architecture. By having more regular ADMM-Plus meetings, the ASEAN countries and Plus countries affirm their shared
commitment to the aims of ADMM-Plus. Maximising opportunities to share strategic perspectives in a shorter meeting cycle will not only improve mutual understanding and promote more focused activity within ADMM-Plus, but will also enhance ASEAN’s resilience. This is vital for peace and security in the region.