CONCEPT PAPER ON OBSERVERSHIP OF ADMM-PLUS EXPERTS’ WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES

Introduction

1. Established in 2010, the ADMM-Plus has played a key role in facilitating strategic dialogue and practical cooperation amongst the ten ASEAN Member States, and eight ASEAN’s Dialogue Partners, namely Australia, China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, the Russia Federation, and the United States (thereafter referred to as the “Plus countries”).

2. With the success of the ADMM-Plus, several non-Plus countries have expressed interest to join the ADMM-Plus. However, acknowledging that the ADMM-Plus was a nascent platform, the 7th ADMM in 2013 agreed that the ADMM-Plus should consolidate and build on its initial success before expanding its membership. This notwithstanding, the 11th ADMM in 2017 agreed that it would be useful for the ADMM-Plus to engage non-Plus countries by allowing them to observe ADMM-Plus Experts’ Working Group (EWG) activities, and adopted the 2nd Additional Protocol to the Establishment of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus.

3. As a follow-up to the 2nd Additional Protocol to the Establishment of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus, this paper outlines the principles, modalities, selection criteria, terms of reference, and approval processes for the non-Plus countries’ observership of the ADMM-Plus EWG activities.

4. This paper should be read in conjunction with all relevant concept papers relating to the conduct of the ADMM-Plus and EWGs, namely: (a) ADMM-Plus Concept Paper (2007); (b) ADMM-Plus: Principles for Membership (2009); (c) ADMM-Plus: Configuration and Composition (2010); (d) ADMM-Plus: Modalities and Procedures (2010); (e) Attachment Paper to the ADMM-Plus; Modalities and Procedures (2010); (f) Concept Paper on Establishing an EWG (2011); (g) Concept Paper on the Transition of the ADMM-Plus EWG Co-chairmanship (2013); (h) Additional Protocol to the Establishment of ADMM and ADMM-Plus (2014); and (i) 2nd Additional Protocol to the Establishment of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus (2017).

Principles for the Observership Programme

5. The following principles shall guide the conduct of the observership programme:
a. **ASEAN Centrality.** The ADMM shall have the prerogative to determine the criteria to select the non-Plus countries as observers of the ADMM-Plus EWG activities. In this regard, this concept paper which outlines the selection criteria for observers shall be approved by the ADMM. In addition, observership of ADMM-Plus EWG activities shall be conducted in accordance with ASEAN principles and processes.

b. **Implications on Membership.** This concept paper reiterates from the 2nd Additional Protocol to the Establishment of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus that observership by non-Plus countries shall not in any way be interpreted as an application for membership to the ADMM-Plus. Furthermore, participation as an observer is not a guarantee or basis for eventual membership in the ADMM-Plus.

**Modalities**

6. Following from the 2nd Additional Protocol to the Establishment of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus, the following modalities shall be adhered to during non-Plus countries’ observership of ADMM-Plus EWG activities:

a. Each non-Plus country shall observe at the most two EWGs.

b. Each EWG activity shall only accommodate one non-Plus country.

c. Observership of ADMM-Plus EWG activities shall commence from the next cycle of EWGs from 2020 to 2023.

d. Observership shall last the duration of one EWG cycle (i.e., three years), and will expire at the end of each EWG cycle.

e. Interested non-Plus countries shall reapply for observership at each new EWG cycle, after the EWG co-chairs have been selected.

f. Prior observership experience does not guarantee continued observer status in the future.

**Selection Criteria for ADMM-Plus Observers**

7. As the ADMM-Plus is an open and inclusive regional security platform that is dynamic and outward looking, non-Plus countries shall fulfil the following criteria for admission as observers of ADMM-Plus EWG activities:
a. The non-Plus country shall demonstrate that it has an interest in strengthening the peace and security of the Asia-Pacific region;

b. The non-Plus country shall have relevant expertise in the EWG(s) they wish to observe.

Terms of Reference

8. In line with the 2nd Additional Protocol to the Establishment of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus, non-Plus countries’ observership of ADMM-Plus EWG activities shall be guided by the following terms of reference:

a. Observers shall not participate in EWG meetings.

b. Observers shall only observe (i.e., be in attendance at) EWG activities. Such activities include seminars, workshops and exercises.

c. Observers shall have no decision-making authority during their observership of ADMM-Plus EWG activities. They shall not contribute to organising EWG activities, and will not be provided with courtesies during the activities.

Approval Processes

9. Non-Plus countries shall submit its observership applications to the Chair of the ADMM-Plus, stating the specific EWG(s) that they wish to observe.

10. The application shall first be discussed and considered by ADSOM WG before being considered by ADSOM-Plus WG.

11. The application shall be approved by ADSOM-Plus through ADSOM.

12. Once the ADSOM-Plus has approved the specific EWG(s) that the non-Plus countries can observe, the respective EWG co-chairs shall decide which activity the non-Plus countries shall observe, noting that each EWG activity shall only accommodate one non-Plus country.

13. Decision-making and all approval processes shall be based on the principle of consultation and consensus.
Conclusion

14. The ADMM-Plus is an integral component of the regional security architecture as it allows ASEAN to work closely with its eight Dialogue Partners on addressing transnational security challenges for the collective benefit of the region. The observership programme which allows non-Plus countries to observe ADMM-Plus EWG activities will strengthen the ADMM-Plus as an open and inclusive platform that is ASEAN-centred. It will also provide meaningful ways for ADMM-Plus and non-Plus countries to collaborate in a mutually beneficial manner.

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