POST-IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW ON THE ANNUALISATION OF THE ASEAN DEFENCE MINISTERS’ MEETING-PLUS

Introduction

1. In 2017, the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM) approved the annualisation of the ADMM-Plus to enhance dialogue and cooperation between the ADMM and the Plus countries. An annual meeting was envisioned to better enable the defence ministers to address common security challenges for the collective benefit of the region and strengthen ASEAN centrality in the regional security architecture.

2. The Concept Paper on the Annualisation of the ADMM-Plus stated that a Post-Implementation Review (PIR) shall be conducted after the 7th ADMM-Plus in 2020 to examine if the annualisation of the ADMM-Plus has been beneficial, and if this frequency should be continued.

Assessment

3. The Concept Paper on the Annualisation of the ADMM-Plus provided three reasons to hold ADMM-Plus meetings annually:

   a. To enhance cooperation among ASEAN and Plus countries via a platform that is driven by ASEAN;

   b. To address concerns over the proliferation of informal ADMM+1 meetings; and

   c. To allow all ASEAN Member States to host the ADMM-Plus with equal regularity.

4. The annual ADMM-Plus meetings have been assessed to have served the above objectives. Specifically, they have achieved the following:

5. **First**, the annual ADMM-Plus meetings have enhanced dialogue and practical cooperation between ASEAN and Plus countries, particularly through the defence ministers’ exchange of views, as well as via regular progress updates of the Experts Working Groups on the practical areas of cooperation. This has enabled the ADMM-Plus to be more responsive in tackling the common security threats arising from an increasingly challenging regional security environment.
6. **Second**, the annual ADMM-Plus meetings have strengthened ASEAN centrality in the regional security architecture and bolstered ASEAN’s role as the driving force in engagements and collaborations with the Plus countries. The annualised modality has further entrenched the ADMM-Plus as the region’s de facto security platform for the Plus countries to engage ASEAN on defence and security matters. The ADMM drives the agenda and progress in the ADMM-Plus, putting it in the driver’s seat for regional security cooperation and engagement via the ADMM-Plus.

7. **Third**, the annual ADMM-Plus meetings have strengthened Plus countries’ commitment to the region and invigorated Plus countries’ engagements with ASEAN. Plus countries have sought to widen and deepen their presence in the region, both bilaterally and multilaterally, through positive and beneficial engagements and initiatives, which have been useful in promoting trust and confidence as well as in capacity building. Various Plus countries that have articulated their visions for engagement and collaboration with ASEAN have also demonstrated their commitment to work within the region’s regional security architecture and strengthen the ADMM and ADMM-Plus.

8. In recent years however, there has been an increasing number of requests by Plus countries to engage ASEAN through ADMM+1 informal meetings. While these meetings provide the Plus country with a useful platform to share in-depth their proposals for further collaboration with ASEAN, the meetings also take up significant AMS resources. In addition, too many of such meetings may also reduce the significance of the actual ADMM-Plus meeting, where all members are present to provide their voice. **ADMM will need to explore more sustainable approaches to such informal meetings, including considering options to reduce and sequence the ADMM+1 informal meetings throughout the year.**

**Proposal**

9. **This paper recommends that the ADMM-Plus continues to be held annually.** The frequency of the ASEAN Defence Senior Officials’ Meeting-Plus (ADSOM-Plus) and the ASEAN Defence Senior Officials’ Meeting-Plus Working Group (ADSOM-Plus WG) will remain unchanged.

**Conclusion**

10. Convening the ADMM-Plus annually will enable the ADMM-Plus to continue with the strong momentum of facilitating strategic dialogue among the Defence Ministers and practical cooperation among the militaries in areas of common interest. With ASEAN at its core, the ADMM-Plus will enhance mutual
trust and confidence between ASEAN and the Plus countries for the collective benefit of our region.

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