CONCEPT PAPER ON
ENHANCING SUPPORT MECHANISM FOR ASEAN WOMEN PEACEKEEPERS

I. PURPOSE

1. This Concept Paper proposes that ASEAN Defence Ministers commit to initiatives that would increase support for ASEAN women peacekeepers and their participation in the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UN PKOs). These initiatives include capacity-building as well as information and knowledge sharing.

II. BACKGROUND

2. PKOs are continuously evolving and there is a need to continue enhancing the capacity of peacekeepers and optimise the use of resources. Women have made positive impacts on peacekeeping environments, including supporting the role of women in building peace and protecting women’s rights.

3. According to the UN, women constituted 4.8% of military contingents, 10.9% of formed police units, and 34% of justice and corrections government-provided personnel in UN Peacekeeping missions in 2020. The UN has set the 2028 target for women serving in military contingents at 15% for military observers, 25% for staff officers, 20% for formed police units, and 30% for individual police officers.

III. STRATEGIC POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

4. ASEAN has recognised women’s critical role in sustaining regional and global peace and security. In 2017, the ASEAN Leaders adopted the Joint Statement on Promoting the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in ASEAN. In 2019, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Foreign Ministers adopted the ARF Joint Statement on Promoting the Women, Peace and Security Agenda at the ARF. In 2020, the East Asia Summit (EAS) adopted the EAS Leaders’ Statement on Women, Peace, and Security. This was also stressed in the ASEAN-UN Plan of Action (POA) 2021–2025 adopted on 22 October 2020 aiming at promoting the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda. ASEAN has also been playing an active role in promoting international peace, particularly under the framework of the UN PKOs. There are 4,454 peacekeeping personnel from six ASEAN Member States (AMS), who are currently serving in missions around the world, of which 363 or 8.14% are women.

5. The ASEAN Peacekeeping Centres Network (APCN) has made remarkable achievements in promoting and enhancing cooperation among defence and armed forces within AMS on PKOs. So far, six PKO centres across the region have been established to provide capacity-building for ASEAN peacekeepers.

6. Despite these important achievements, there remain gaps and limitations in knowledge sharing and capacity building particularly among ASEAN women peacekeepers. Moreover, women are underrepresented in peace operations. Against this backdrop, it is vital to encourage, empower and enable women to become a meaningful part of the peace processes. There are opportunities to benefit in encouraging and enabling women to fully and meaningfully participate in peace operations.
IV. SCOPE AND FORM OF ACTIVITIES

7. The Concept Paper proposes initiatives to enhance a support mechanism for ASEAN women peacekeepers through the establishment of a network of ASEAN women peacekeepers in alignment with the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

8. As the network develops, specific activities could include:

   A. Strengthening Readiness
      
      i. Develop mentoring programmes to connect experienced women peacekeepers with new and junior women peacekeepers.
      ii. Promote joint exercises among the ASEAN women peacekeepers, including Tabletop Exercises and Field Training Exercises on PKOs in cooperation with the APCN and the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting Plus Experts’ Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations (ADMM-Plus EWG on PKO).

   B. Pre-deployment phase
      
      i. Encourage the participation of ASEAN service women in peacekeeping operations.
      ii. Exchange best practices and lessons learnt on capacity-building in support of women participation in peacekeeping operations.
      iii. Enhance the capacity of ASEAN women peacekeepers through training and information sharing, including seminars and workshops.

   C. Deployment phase
      
      i. Develop a support mechanism for ASEAN women peacekeepers who are being deployed in the same country or region, depending on available resources and capabilities.
      ii. Record and share information and knowledge on the experiences of women in peacekeeping in field operations.
      iii. Promote the ASEAN Community spirit and identity among the ASEAN peacekeepers by organising joint social and cultural events such as ASEAN Day.

V. REVIEW AND REPORT

The progress of the Network of ASEAN Women Peacekeepers will be annually updated and reported to the ADMM through the ASEAN Defence Senior Officials’ Meeting (ADSM) and ADSOM Working Group.