DISCUSSION PAPER ON REFLECTING MILITARY HISTORY TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE PEACE

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Military history is a record of past events in human history that has some impacts on society, culture and economy. It is also a record of changes in domestic and international relations, including the role of military in conflict prevention and resolution, through the exercise of military strategy and support for peace operations.

2. To promote the study of military history is a step towards defining a common vision of peace and security as shared public assets. It can contribute to promoting sustainable peace through the understanding and the drawing of experiences from both the success and failure of the exercise of military force in the past. This enables us to develop more effective means of using military in the future. It helps us understand where the military can contribute to “sustainable peace”. “Sustainable peace” here refers to a state where the probability of using destructive forces to solve problems is low, while the probability of using dialogue and cooperative security is high.

3. Each country in the ASEAN region has different historical experiences from one another which presents a loophole to fill in establishing mutual understanding and mutual respects. Understanding military history is an important building block in laying the foundation of deeper appreciations among each of ASEAN Member States’ (AMS) military and is also a vital catalyst to promote profound cooperation. Through experience sharing, studies and research, meetings and workshops; together with practical cooperation, building a strategy to maintain peace and stability for the region can be done with the adherence to common understanding, and mutual respects of the past and future can be developed.

4. Furthermore, the experiences of an individual country in ending conflicts can contribute to the development of regional approaches to conflict resolutions, given the right scenarios. This provides an important vision or a principle of regional security as well. It is in the interest of the AMS to establish closer cooperation in promoting understanding and sharing of experiences related to and about their practical experiences as well as challenges they have faced. The defence policy documents of each country in the region, which have been implemented in the past, can provide input into a regional defence strategy and show that the study of military history is not just about war, but also about seeking and sustaining peace. The most important aim is to seek mutual
understanding among AMS via exchange of visits, exercises or training courses on military history which encourages ASEAN countries to not only better understand each other and their diverse military cultures, but also what they have in common, that can help strengthen regional cooperation and the sustainability of regional peace.

5. Deeper understanding on the history of military forces among the AMS may be forged through meetings, discussions and workshops held by Track II, for example through the Track II Network of ASEAN Defence and Security Institutions (NADI).

II. OBJECTIVES:

6. The study of military history particularly on the role of military in conflict resolution will, in the long run, enhance the culture of dialogue and strengthen the ecosystem of peace in the ASEAN region. Specific objectives of the discussion paper are as follows:

   a. To promote open dialogue, research and publication and sharing of experiences on military history in the region;

   b. To seek innovative approaches to sustainable peace building upon reflections of military history;

   c. To share best practices, lessons learned, and achievements related to the past participation of the military in conflict resolution, peaceful reconciliation, and national reconciliation in the ASEAN region.

III. CONCLUSION

7. The discussion paper will serve as future reference, and in its current format is not intended for immediate operationalisation. Further deliberation that implies possible implementation must be undertaken with full respect for applicable ADMM/ADMM-Plus guidelines and relevant practices in the defence sector. If and where necessary, follow-up to this discussion paper may involve existing Track II mechanisms such as NADI.