GUIDELINES TO RESPOND TO THE REQUEST FOR INFORMAL ENGAGEMENTS OR MEETINGS BY THE ADMM-PLUS COUNTRIES

Introduction

1. The aim of this Paper is to follow through the discussions made at the ASEAN Defence Senior Officials' Meeting Working Group Informal Meeting (ADSOM WG Informal Meeting) on 18 November 2014, in Bagan, Myanmar. Particularly, several Member States raised the need for procedures and guidelines to be developed to deal with the request by the Plus countries for more exclusive interactions.

2. This Paper does not intend to establish a formal mechanism for the engagement between ADMM and one of the Plus countries.

Background

3. The guiding principles for engagement between ASEAN Member States and Plus countries within the ASEAN Defence Minister's Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) mechanism have been set out in the previously adopted papers, as follows:

   a. Concept Paper on ADMM-Plus adopted at the 2nd ADMM, November 2007;
   d. Concept Paper on Establishing an Experts' Working Group adopted at the 1st ADMM-Plus, April 2011;
   e. Additional Protocol to the Concept Paper for the Establishment of an ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) adopted at the 8th ADMM, May 2014.

4. The cooperation with the Plus countries has been streamlined into specific areas of mutual interests. Currently, the ASEAN Member States co-lead Experts’ Working Groups (EWGs) on maritime security, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, peacekeeping operations, military medicine and humanitarian mine action, with a Plus Country.
Present Situation

5. In addition to the existing mechanisms, in recent years, several Plus Countries have initiated Informal ADMM Meetings with their respective countries. Thus far, we have convened Informal Meetings with:

   a. China: every year since 2011 at the sidelines of ADMMs in Jakarta, Phnom Penh, Bandar Seri Begawan and Nay Pyi Taw;

   b. The U.S.: every year since 2011 at the sidelines of ADMM Retreat in Bali, Siem Reap and Bandar Seri Begawan in 2013 and in Hawaii in 2014; and


Rationale

6. There is a growing concern that multiple informal meetings besides ADMM-Plus and Related Meetings would cause proliferation of meetings with separate agendas, which may possibly overlap with the ADMM-Plus.

7. In attending these informal meetings, the Member States, in usual circumstances have to utilize the same human resources as in the ADMM, ADMM Retreat, ADMM-Plus and ADMM-Plus Experts’ Working Group meetings. Consequently the capacity of the Member States would be unnecessarily overstretched, in addition to potentially causing more financial implication and disrupting the smooth-running of the planned activities.

Guiding Principles

8. The Informal Meeting shall be guided by the following principles:

   a. The meeting shall uphold the spirit of ASEAN Centrality, people-centredness and people-orientedness.

   b. Informal Meetings with Plus countries shall only be held during the years when the ADMM-Plus does not convene.

   c. The informal meetings shall only be convened up to two meetings per year, each at the sidelines of the ADMM and the ADMM Retreat. If there is more than two requests, those that are not accepted may be considered in the following year.

   d. The decision to accept the requests for informal meetings shall be decided through consensus, on a case-to-case basis based on the following considerations to include but not limited to urgency of the meeting and indicative list of topics, among others.
e. Interested Plus country shall submit the request to conduct the Informal Meeting to the Chair of the ADMM, who will then consult the ASEAN Member States. The ASEAN Defence Senior Officials’ Meeting (ADSOM) Working Group and ADSOM will deliberate on the proposal before submitting it to ADMM for consideration.

f. In line with the informal nature of the engagements, there shall be no support mechanisms such as working groups or follow-on activities from the Informal Meeting.

**Conclusion**

9. The Paper shall act as guidance for all ASEAN Member States and Plus countries for future conduct of the Informal Meeting. These guidelines shall be read together with the previously adopted ADMM-Plus related Concept Papers.