



THE ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM: PAVING THE WAY FOR A PEACEFUL ASIA-PACIFIC

14 January 2008

FACT SHEET

2008/APSC/002

Peace and Security in the Asia-Pacific Region

The end of the Cold War altered the configuration of international relations in the Asia-Pacific region. This new environment presented historic opportunities for the relaxation of tensions in the region through multilateral consultations, confidence building, and eventually the prevention of conflicts.

Hence, at the 1992 Singapore Summit, the ASEAN Leaders set the momentum for such a development by declaring that "ASEAN shall move towards a higher plane of political and economic cooperation to secure regional peace and prosperity."

The ASEAN Regional Forum

The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was then established with the first ARF convened in Bangkok on 25 July 1994 with the following objectives: to foster constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern; to make significant contributions to efforts towards confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region; and to promote open dialogue on political and security operation in the region.

As of 2007, there are 27 participants in the ARF: Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Canada, China, European Union, India, Indonesia, Japan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Russian Federation, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, United States and Viet Nam.

ARF's Evolutionary Approach

Since its inception, the ARF has taken an evolutionary approach extended over three broad stages, namely confidence-building measures, preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution. Currently, the ARF is moving to stage two of its cooperation, that is, the development of preventive diplomacy. While evolving to preventive diplomacy, the ARF has

also moved from looking at mere traditional security threats to non-traditional ones including counter-terrorism, non-proliferation, small arms and light weapons, peacekeeping, disaster relief, cyber security, maritime security and energy security.

This evolution is also in parallel to the transformation from dialogue-based confidence-building measures to action-based preventive diplomacy such as in maritime security and in disaster relief.

Friends of the ARF Chair

The objectives of the ARF are now supported by the establishment of the Friends of the ARF Chair mechanism (FoC). The FoC represents a troika consisting of Foreign Ministers of the immediate past and future ARF chairing countries and a non-ASEAN ARF country. The FoC mechanism will assist the ARF Chair in dealing with international situations which affect peace and security in the region, such as serving as good offices in times of emergency and crisis.

ARF Defence Cooperation

The ARF, since 2002, has also provided the venue for the ARF defence officials to meet to allow for open and frank discussions amidst building up the level of confidence and trust among the participants. Separately, the heads of defence universities/institutions from ARF participating countries also meet annually. -

For more information on this subject, contact Mr. Pratap Parameswaran (pratap@asean.org) of the ARF Unit at the ASEAN Secretariat.

Please visit www.aseanregionalforum.org for more information on ARF and www.asean.org for more information on ASEAN cooperation on peace and security.