

The 19th Tokyo Defense Forum (TDF)
Summary by the Chair
Tokyo, 4 and 5 March 2015

I. Introduction

1. The 19th Tokyo Defense Forum (Forum for Defense Authorities in the Asia-Pacific Region: TDF) was held in Tokyo, on 4 and 5 March 2015, with the participation of 24 countries (Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Kingdom of Cambodia, Canada, China, India, Republic of Indonesia, Japan, **Lao People's Democratic Republic**, Malaysia, Mongolia, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, New Zealand, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Republic of Singapore, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Kingdom of Thailand, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, the United States of America, and Socialist Republic of Vietnam). Representatives from the ASEAN Secretariat, European Union (EU), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) also attended the Forum.
2. The Forum was chaired by Mr. Akira KONO, Director-General for International Affairs, Ministry of Defense, Japan.
3. The Forum addressed two agendas: “Enhancing Maritime Security” and “Synergy Among the Frameworks For Multilateral Cooperation”.
4. Mr. Kenji HARADA, Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Defense of Japan, made the opening remark. He noted that the Asia-Pacific continues its rapid economic growth, which relays on the maritime commons, while there are a range of issues including a possibility of unexpected incidents out of the competitions for the maritime interests and the continuing piracy issues, which challenge the stable and open order at sea. In this **context, he highlighted the importance of promoting “Good Seamanship,”** countering piracy activities, and providing the capacity building assistances to the coastal states. He also discussed the emerging needs to

enhance mutual coordination among the existing multilateral frameworks, arguing that such agenda is a common concern for the regional countries.

II. Session I: Enhancing Maritime Security

5. The Session reaffirmed the consensus view that the peace and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific or more widely, the Indo-Pacific region, critically depends on stable and rules-based order at sea. In the meantime, the participants also discussed a wide range of both traditional and non-traditional challenges such as maritime disputes and piracy. In this context, the growing importance of peace and stability in the trade routes such as Indian Ocean, the Malacca and Singapore Straits and South China Sea were particularly highlighted by a number of participants.
6. Many participants expressed their continuing supports for the rules-based order at sea. In this regard, the session discussed the importance of international laws including UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea). Some participants suggested that the regional countries should continue candid exchange of thoughts in order **to build common understanding about “what are the international laws?” and “how do they apply?”**.
7. On top of the international rules, the session discussed the importance of **“Good Seamanship,” a set of norms that sea-faring people need to share** in order to avoid misunderstanding and unexpected incidents.
8. In addition, a number of participants stressed the importance of CUES (Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea) as adopted at the WPNS meeting in China, last April. The Session also touched upon some potential next steps such as the exercising of the measures as identified in CUES.
9. The on-going work towards establishment of Direct Communications Link, or DCL among the ASEAN defense authorities was highlighted as a useful way to prevent escalations and promote quick cooperation in

emergency situations. Some participants suggested that it may be worth expanding such DCL networks to include the Plus countries in the future.

10. Many participants stressed the point that countries should further enhance bilateral engagement with regional partners.
11. The participants agreed to continue to actively participate in regional multilateral frameworks such as ADMM Plus (ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus). In particular, it was pointed out that ADMM Plus and its **Experts' Working Group on Maritime Security play key roles in** promoting the regional maritime security cooperation among the defense forces of the Indo-Pacific region. The session was briefed on the upcoming ADMM-Plus Maritime Security and Counter-Terrorism Exercise co-hosted by Brunei and Singapore in May 2016.
12. Some participants expressed their view that the region should make more effective use of the existing multilateral frameworks rather than create new ones. In that context, the importance of EAS (East Asia Summit) was highlighted, which has the highest political-level meeting annually and the membership identical to that of ADMM Plus.
13. Going forward, some participants proposed a mechanism in which not just navies but also other sea-faring actors such as coast guards, shipping industry, and international organizations can participate and discuss the maritime security. The Session discussed (1) the counter piracy operations in which both military and civilian actors are actively involved (2) information-sharing networks to enhance regional cooperation, as well as (3) the maritime confidence-building measures in which the coast guards can and should play critical roles. In this regard, some participants suggested that CUES is indeed the good first step but should be expanded to include other actors in its scope.
14. Some participants suggested that the scope of the discussions should be expanded beyond the maritime domain as the problems at sea sometimes originate from the land, for example the maritime pollution caused by the environmental changes on the land.

III. Session II: Synergy Among the Frameworks For Multilateral Cooperation

15. The Session discussed the concept of synergy among the existing regional multilateral frameworks such as ADMM Plus and ARF, particularly in the HADR (Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief) field. The participants agreed that the efforts towards greater synergy should be promoted in the way that the duplications including the conflicting schedules and the overlapping exercises be reduced and the complementarity be enhanced. It was also noted that the synergy should be pursued in the way that supports the ASEAN centrality and contributes to confidence-building and a shared sense of community in the region.
16. Some participants pointed out that there are key differences between ARF and ADMM Plus. For example, while a range of government agencies participate in ARF activities and focuses on policy discussions, ADMM Plus engages in strategic dialogue with focus on the military-to-military cooperation and has a good track record of operational deliverables, such as exercises led by the various **Experts' Working Groups**. In this context, it was noted that the overlapping agenda of ARF and ADMM Plus is not necessarily negative and could be even considered as advantage.
17. It was pointed out that, although ARF is sometimes characterized as a venue for dialogues with little implementation, **ARF's flexibility to adjust** and expand its discussion agenda should not be under-estimated.
18. The Session welcomed the progress of the practical cooperation under the **Experts' Working Group (EWG) on HADR currently co-chaired** by Lao PDR and Japan. **The details of the EWG's activities were provided** including on-going development of Standard Operating Procedures, or an ADMM Plus SOP, and the current planning for the Table Top Exercise in Lao PDR, August 2015, and the HADR-EWG & Military-Medicine EWG-combined Command Post Exercise/Field Training Exercise in

Thailand, September 2016. It was welcomed that while the ADMM Plus focuses on the military-to-military cooperation, the HADR-EWG engages civilian actors such as UNOCHA and AHA Center.

19. The session highlighted the active roles played by the defense forces in the regional HADR operations while noting that the disaster relief activities are essentially a civilian-led mission.
20. The participants stressed the point that the synergy between ARF and ADMM Plus needs further discussions in these frameworks themselves. In this regard, it was noted that **the findings of today's discussions should** be briefed in ARF and ADMM Plus.
21. The session discussed the needs to promote civil-military coordination and the relevant discussions through UNOCHA's regional Civil-Military Consultative Group, whose next meeting is scheduled in Singapore, April 2015.

IV. Closing Remarks

22. The participants shared the view that TDF plays unique roles in promoting candid and active discussions among the Director-General level officials in the region and beyond.
23. The Chair thanked all participants for their support and valuable contributions to the Forum. Participants expressed their appreciation to Japan as the host to organize this Forum for the promotion of regional defense dialogue and cooperation.