

**STATEMENT BY
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KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA
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**AGENDA ITEM 6: ENHANCING TIES BETWEEN THE COUNCIL FOR SECURITY
COOPERATION IN THE ASIA AND PACIFIC (CSCAP)
AND THE ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM**

❖ **ASEAN Community and Laos' ASEAN Chairmanship in 2016**

- ASEAN Leaders, at the 27th ASEAN Summit, opened up a new chapter of the ASEAN history by signing the KL Declaration on the establishment of the ASEAN Community on 31 December 2015 and adopted the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the three community Blueprints that chart out direction to further consolidate and strengthen the ASEAN Community for the next ten years. However, ASEAN Community building is an on-going process that will continue over the years with the aim of realizing an ASEAN Community that is politically cohesive, economically integrated and socially responsible.
- 2016 is an important and exciting year for ASEAN as it is the first year ASEAN has become a Community and also the first year for the implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025. Therefore, Laos introduced the theme for 2016 ASEAN Chairmanship: ***"Turning Vision into Reality for a Dynamic ASEAN Community"*** which reflects ASEAN's efforts to further strengthen the ASEAN Community by implementing the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and its Blueprints, among others.
- Therefore, as the Chair of ASEAN in 2016, we will focus on the implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and its Blueprints towards concrete results.
- To this end, we will build upon ASEAN's achievements made thus far with the aim of maintaining and promoting a peaceful, stable, and outward-looking ASEAN region, with highly integrated and cohesive regional economy, enhanced connectivity and strengthened efforts in narrowing the development gap, thus contributing to the common cause of maintaining and promoting international peace, stability and development as well as the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.
- In addition, we will continue ASEAN's efforts in narrowing the development gap and enhancing ASEAN connectivity, which are among the priority areas of ASEAN and also an integral part of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025.

- Moreover, tourism, trade promotion, small and medium enterprise development, employment creation and cultural preservation are areas that ASEAN would also need to focus on in 2016, among others.
- We will also continue to promote effective cooperation with Dialogue Partners and external partners in line with ASEAN's outward-looking policy, while enhancing ASEAN Centrality, and we are also open to our cooperation with prospective external partners.

❖ **Role of the ARF**

- ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was incepted in 1994 as the primary forum for dialogue on political and security related issues of common interest and concern in the Asia Pacific region. Over the past 23 years, the ARF has made gradual achievements. Most importantly, the ARF has been successful in bringing together diverse parties in Asia Pacific to promote mutual understanding, confidence and trust, thereby contributing to maintaining and promoting peace, stability and development cooperation in the region and the world as a whole.
- The ARF achievements over the past 23 years have been possible thanks to the common efforts of all ARF participants in working together on the basis of consultation and consensus and to move forward together at a pace comfortable to all ARF participants, taking into account the diversity of this Asia-Pacific region.
- The Lao PDR was the ARF Chair in 2004-2005 and is the Chair of the ARF in 2016. As the Chair of the ARF in 2016, the Lao PDR stands ready to work closely with all ARF participants to build upon the ARF achievements and further strengthen and move the ARF forward at a pace comfortable to all ARF participants with a view to further enhancing mutual understanding, trust and confidence, thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of peace, stability and cooperation for development in the region and the world at large.

❖ **APSC Blueprint 2025 and the ARF Process**

- Under the APSC Blueprint 2025, strengthening the ARF process is a significant element with 8 action lines that are broad and very strategic in nature which need to be realised and implemented with an aim of enhancing the ARF process in support of the ASEAN Community as well as to ensure that the ARF will be able to respond to the common challenges facing the Asia-Pacific region. This Blueprint also upholds the purpose of preserving regional peace and stability.
- Action lines related to ARF in the APSC Blueprint:
 - Enhance the role of the Chair of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in enhancing dialogue and cooperation on political security issues through the promotion of confidence-building measures, preventive diplomacy activities as well as conflict resolution initiatives;
 - Enhance the ARF as an action-oriented mechanism that develops concrete and effective responses to the common challenges confronting the Asia-Pacific region;

- Continue to implement the decision of the ARF Ministers to move the ARF towards the stage of preventive diplomacy while continuing to strengthen confidence-building measures; develop mutually beneficial cooperation, as appropriate with relevant regional and international organizations;
- Recognize the ARF Experts and Eminent Persons' contribution to the work of the ARF and utilize their recommendations, where appropriate, to strengthen the ARF;
- Review the ARF mechanisms and processes to strengthen the effectiveness and coordination of the ARF, including taking into account the work of the other relevant mechanisms;
- Advance the ARF process towards preventive diplomacy, through the effective implementation of the ARF Preventive Diplomacy Work Plan 2011 while continuing with confidence building measures;
- Compile best practices on confidence-building measures, preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution for further development by the ARF;
- Explore and consider the potential for mediation/facilitated dialogue and conciliation under the ARF process, with the consent of all directly involved parties;
- Continue to contribute to and publish the ARF Security Outlook with a view to deepening mutual understanding and trust among countries in the region and beyond; and
- Enhance the effective participation of ARF defence officials in ARF activities.

❖ **Role of Track II Organizations**

- As stated in the ARF Vision Statement (adopted by ARF Foreign Ministers who at their 16th ARF Meeting in July 2009 charted out a vision for the ARF by 2020), in building partnership for comprehensive security, Track II organizations, including the ARF Experts and Eminent Persons (EEPs), ASEAN ISIS and CSCAP and relevant accredited civil society groups can provide useful ideas and policy inputs and help raise awareness of the ARF.
- We see the importance of intensifying ties between Track 1 and Track 2 to strengthen the work of ARF and there is a need to strengthen partnership with Track 2 organizations. We note the active role played by the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), which had made valuable contributions to the ARF process among others through the publication of CSCAP Security Outlook.

❖ **Hanoi Plan of Action to Implement the ARF Vision Statement**

- The Plan of Action (PoA) implements the ARF Vision Statement to strengthen the ARF process and move it forward at a pace comfortable to all Participants, in its evolution from the stage of confidence-building measures, which have been the main focus of the ARF's activities, to the development of preventive diplomacy, while the ultimate stage is elaboration on approaches to conflict resolution.
- To ensure effective implementation of the Plan of Action, ARF institutional features need to be enhanced through, among others by working with Track II organizations (as stipulated in the Hanoi POA):

- Encourage joint research projects on defense issues by regional government-affiliated policy and strategic research institutes;
- Encourage the development of modality/guidelines for regular consultation with Track II organizations;
- Encourage the development of an appropriate procedure that allows Track II participants to meaningfully contribute to ARF, through the implementation of the existing procedure to consider recommendations from ASEAN-ISIS, and CSCAP; and
- Encourage Track II organizations to enhance ARF's public profile and visibility.