

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY DATO PADUKA HAJI MUSTAPPA BIN HAJI SIRAT,
DEPUTY MINISTER OF DEFENCE AT THE 9TH MEETING OF ADMM - PLUS EXPERTS'
WORKING GROUP ON MARITIME SECURITY**

*TUESDAY, 28 OCTOBER 2014 CORRESPONDING WITH 04 MUHARRAM 1436 HIJRAH
CENTREPOINT HOTEL, BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, BRUNEI DARUSSALAM*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Alhamdulillah Rabbil 'Alamin, Wassalatu Wassalamu 'Ala Asyrafil Anbiya'i Wal Mursalin, Sayyidina Muhammadin Wa'ala Alihi Wa Sohbihi Ajma'in.

Rabbisy Rahli Shadri, Wa Yassirli 'Amri, Wahlul Uqdatam Millisani, Yaf Qahu Qauli.

Mr. Co Chairmen, Your Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

And a very good morning.

It gives me great pleasure to extend our very warm welcome to all the heads and members of delegation to Brunei Darussalam.

We are indeed very grateful for your support and to have your presence here for the 9th ADMM-Plus Experts' working Group Meeting on Maritime Security.

We do hope that in the midst of your busy schedule you will be able to spare some time to visit interesting places and to appreciate our long-standing traditions of the Malay Muslim Monarchy in Brunei Darussalam.

Your meeting today is held against the backdrop of growing importance of the Asia Pacific maritime area.

The region has witnessed an unprecedented increase in human activities promising huge economic prospect and greater prosperity for the future.

It offers one of the world's resources for hydro carbon, fisheries, and aquaculture. And, for us, in Brunei Darussalam, they represent a major contributor to our Gross Domestic Product. Hence, we are economically dependent on these resources for development and progress.

As well as this, the South China Sea is also vital in connecting the region with the outside world through telecommunication and shipping.

It is, as we became aware, one of the busiest sea-lane of communication in the world, where more than 60,000 vessels traverse the water annually and carrying a third of the global trade.

Given its importance, this dynamic environment has opened up new opportunities for increased and strengthened cooperation among countries in the region, including in the field of defence and security.

ASEAN, through the ASEAN Defence Ministerial Meeting, in particular, has made great stride in working closely together in this area and building itself as one of the main forum for consensus and consultation on peace and stability in the region.

We have much to thank and appreciate our dialogue partners for their support and contribution.

While maintaining its centrality, ASEAN and ASEAN's dialogue relationship in the framework of ADMM-Plus, has gained momentum as an integral part of the ASEAN process and to contribute to the realisation of the ASEAN Political-Security Community by 2015.

The 2nd ADMM-Plus Meeting in Brunei Darussalam recognised the positive contribution made by ADMM-Plus countries in enhancing peace, stability and development in Southeast Asia, and their interest in promoting closer cooperation to address common security issues and challenges.

The Ministers reaffirmed that the ADMM-Plus is a key component of a robust, effective, open and inclusive regional security architecture for regular dialogue and practical cooperation among its defence establishments.

The Ministers' decision to set up Experts' Working Groups was timely and relevant in addressing the non-traditional security challenges.

Your journey has been most precious and represents a sincere effort towards enhancing friendships, mutual trust and confidence among the defence establishment.

This is how I see the importance of your work today, and the progress you have made thus far to explore the various areas of practical cooperation.

As well as this, the substantive achievements of the Experts' Working Group must be relevant to the interest and the concern of the region.

Hence, in my view, the task of the Expert Working group on Maritime Security would meaningfully aimed at achieving the following objectives:-

First, in the realm of capacity-building. Your work must contribute and add value to the member countries' effort to develop their own defence capacity, especially in addressing our common challenges.

I believe, this can be achieved for example through the sharing of information and the exchange of training and exercises.

Second, through joint exercises, your work is vital in determining and developing inter-operability and command structures among the defence forces.

Thereon, we will weigh our capability to respond jointly to common challenges such as in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief, Peace Keeping Operation, Piracy and Counter-Terrorism.

Third, your work must meaningfully advance the cause of peace and stability in the region and serve as the basis for preventive diplomacy, by developing measures that prevent the eruption of conflict including peace keeping and peace building.

Brunei Darussalam recognises the importance of promoting stability and cooperation in the maritime area and has taken an active role in fostering trust and confidence.

His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam at the ASEAN Summit last year re-emphasised the need to make further progress on the regional code of conduct in the South China Sea and to establish direct communication link and avoid misunderstanding and miscalculation at sea.

In furtherance to this idea, I should like to remind you that the 2nd ADMM-Plus Meeting encouraged defence and military establishments to establish practical measures that reduce vulnerability to miscalculations, and avoid misunderstanding and undesirable incidents at sea.

This may seem as a huge undertaking for the Experts' Working Group. Nevertheless, we must not lose sight of the importance of addressing more immediate concern and its implication to the overall security interest of the region.

In that regard, let me also take this opportunity to welcome the progress made by the Experts' Working Groups over the past three years.

I am happy to note that the EWGs have successfully conducted three (3) practical exercises and two(2) table-top exercises that underscores this achievements.

This includes the ADMM-Plus Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief and Military Medicine exercise, as a landmark cooperation among the defence forces of the ADMM-Plus.

The success of this exercise has clearly demonstrated the member countries' strong commitment and determination to contribute towards regional security.

Also visibly evident was our ability to set up a command structure for such large-scale deployment of forces, inter-operability in communication mobility and many other operational imperatives.

I have no doubt that given the political will, ASEAN and the ADMM-Plus Member countries always have the capacity to respond jointly to any such urgencies.

I have also been informed that this conference will be followed by a Table Top Exercises built on a scenario of anti-piracy.

I feel, the exercise is timely, especially in light of the recent incidents that remind us of the vulnerability of our waters.

Being an important maritime region and home to some of the busiest ports in the world, the rise in piracy incidents has added visible pressure on the need to be more vigilant/ and responsive to address these challenges.

In this regard, I hope the Experts' Working Group on Maritime Security will be able to explore an effective mechanism for multilateral cooperation and response against piracy in the future.

I am also happy to note the proposal, as a key deliverable, to hold the ADMM-Plus Maritime Security-Counter-Terrorism Field Training Exercise to be held in 2016.

Mr. Co-Chairmen and distinguished delegates,

In conclusion, I would like to once again highlight the central role of the Experts' Working Group on Maritime Security as a platform to work towards enhancing regional

capacity, joint capabilities and promoting preventive measures in addressing current security challenges.

On that note, I wish you fruitful discussions in your meeting and a pleasant stay in Brunei Darussalam. Thank you very much.

Wabillahit Taufik Walhidayah Wassalamu'alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakaatuh.