



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS
BY DATO PADUKA HAJI MUSTAPPA BIN HAJI SIRAT
THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF DEFENCE
BRUNEI DARUSSALAM**

“Prospects of Cooperation in the South China Sea”

The 6th ASEAN NAVY CHIEFS’ MEETING (ANCM6)

3 September 2012

Indera Kayangan Ballroom
Empire Hotel and Country Club
Brunei Darussalam

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Alhamdulillah Rabbil 'Alamin

Wassalatu Wassalamu 'Ala Asyrafil Anbiyai Wal Mursalin

Sayyidina Muhammadin Wa 'Ala Alihi Wa Sohbihi Ajma'in

Major General Dato Paduka Seri Haji Aminuddin Ihsan bin Pehin

Orang Kaya Saiful Mulok Dato Seri Paduka Haji Abidin.

Commander of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces

First Admiral Dato Seri Pahlawan Hj Abd Halim bin Hj Mohammad

Hanifah, Commander of the Royal Brunei Navy,

Chairman of the 6th ASEAN Navy Chief's Meeting,

Chiefs of Navy from ASEAN countries,

Excellencies, Distinguish Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Ta'ala Wabarakatuh

And a very good morning.

Let me first of all, extend a warm welcome to all our guests, the

ASEAN Chiefs of Navy and their delegations and to wish them a

pleasant and memorable stay in Brunei Darussalam.

I hope in the midst of your busy schedule, you will be able to visit

some of our interesting destination and to taste the flavor of the

Malay culture and tradition in Brunei Darussalam.

I am pleased that the 6th ASEAN Navy Chiefs Meeting is held here on the eve of Brunei Darussalam's Chairmanship of ASEAN Defence Ministerial Meeting. For that I would like to congratulate the ASEAN Chiefs of Navy for your achievements thus far in fostering cooperation in Naval Defence in ASEAN,

Over the six years since its formation, The ASEAN Navy Chiefs Meeting (ANCM) has developed into an important forum for naval and maritime dialogue, and has contributed much to the development of trusts, confidence and friendship among ASEAN Countries.

Rightly so, I feel, South East Asia has, in the recent years, witnessed rapid growth and a vibrant economy, which also means greater connectedness and people to people contact, as well as, growing interdependence between us.

The security challenges in the region remain daunting and complex, characterized by illegal activities, competing demand for resources and long standing disputes over lands and territories.

With the prospect for resolution remains distant and illusive, it does appear that they are going to be there for some time to come. Hence, the task of preserving peace and prosperity cannot be left within the limit of the sovereign responsibility of one country alone, but also through collaboration among the countries in the region.

While we cannot simply ignore these challenges, our resolve should also be translated into political commitment among countries to maintain the prevailing security and stability by fostering closer cooperation and understanding.

Let me also emphasize the importance of the maritime areas as a means of communication with huge resources therein that can be tapped for economic development, and the dynamic of ASEAN embarking on greater economic integration with free flow of people, goods and services.

These realities only serve to reinforce the view that the prospect for cooperation in maritime areas remain vast and it is even more compelling now than before. At the same time ASEAN saw that its maritime cooperation has strategic importance and identified the following objectives as possible areas of cooperation:

- i. Marine environmental protection;
- ii. Marine scientific research;
- iii. Safety of navigation and communication at sea;
- iv. Search and rescue operation; and
- v. Combating transnational crime.

These objectives may at this juncture not far fetched but represent a noble hope, if not a practical approach to ASEAN naval cooperation since there is still plenty that needs to be done before one is prepared to do so.

As such, I believe, naval cooperation among nations, either bilaterally or multi-laterally, would not only aim to fulfill their defence objective, but also to initially help build member countries' capacity for regional cooperation in those areas.

For this reason, we have been very grateful to be able to play a role and to be part of a regional process, such as the hosting of the ASEAN Navy Chief's Meeting; and also to our friends and neighbors for the cooperation that we have developed over so many years, that have contributed to the development of our defence, especially through the exchange of visits and training.

Secondly, bringing this to another level, I feel collaboration in joint exercises could encourage interoperability and enhance the force readiness in responding to any possible scenarios as the situation warrants, either individually or jointly with another force. Such collaboration very often brings greater benefit of fostering warm friendship and camaraderie among the naval officers and foster the sense of goodwill and trust and avoid misunderstanding.

On a smaller scale, we have seen examples of successful cooperation between defence and security agencies of countries in the region. The coordinated naval patrols in the Malacca Straits and the "Eyes in the Sky" initiative for example has contributed in the drastic reduction of incidents of piracy and smuggling in that area.

That brings me to my third point on the importance of Military Operation Other than War, which has increasingly been

recognized as an important means to respond to traditional and non traditional security challenges.

I personally see this as good model for preventive diplomacy as advocated by the ASEAN Regional Forum. Military Operation Other Than War, especially those conducted under the umbrella of the United Nations and regional efforts such as the IMT, has the neutral force to prevent crisis from escalating into a violent conflict. For such eventuality, ASEAN must look at the development of its own standard operating procedures so that coordinated effort at the maximum can be achieved especially in dealing with regional emergencies such as Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief.

Given all this, and given the current level of confidence among ASEAN perhaps the ultimate of military cooperation in the region is the ability to conduct joint operation together and eventually to work towards the notion of defence similar to those adopted by other regions based on the principle of comprehensive security.

This may seem far fetched, but the vision to establish ASEAN Community is coming close to reality as it is formulated on the foundation of Common Peace and Security.

The ASEAN Charter reflects this fact. Member Countries have a *(and I quote)* **“shared commitment and collective responsibility in enhancing regional peace, security and prosperity”** in which Member Countries shall **“respond effectively, in accordance with the principle of comprehensive security, to all forms of**

threats, transnational crimes and transboundary challenges.”

(end of quote)

ASEAN has made great advances in promoting peace and stability through its efforts in establishing an ASEAN Community, including the ASEAN Political and Security Community.

Well-meaning cooperation has been established... and mechanisms to improve cooperation are also in place. In the past years, the dynamism of non-traditional security challenges and its trans-border nature... have called on countries to cooperate together for the sake of global security and stability.

At the same time, we see a trend for increased military role to take on those non-traditional challenges. In addressing these challenges, the Royal Brunei Armed Forces have expanded its roles to deal with security imperatives and operational priorities that go beyond their traditional function of defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the nation.

We have been presented with a better opportunity to further strengthen current bilateral cooperation, build new relations and promote multilateralism.

Military exercises, training and intelligence exchanges, continue to be a strong component in defence cooperation among countries in the region.

In the context of the ADMM-Plus, efforts are already underway to prepare for the first multilateral exercise on HADR and Military Medicine next year. Brunei Darussalam is honoured to co-host that exercise.

The exercise represents a significant milestone in promoting the spirit of cooperation, in the wider context of Asia Pacific region.

It is our hope that these interactions would serve to encourage and promote understanding between armed forces, improved interoperability and put in place mechanisms for a more coordinated response in the future.

Distinguished Guests,

The traditional and non-traditional challenges that we all face continue to add an element of uncertainty to the security situation in our region. I do, however, believe there are great prospects for cooperation among us. Especially, with ASEAN's long history of friendship and regional cooperation, I am confident that we can effectively manage those challenges.

Brunei Darussalam, is committed to work with others in supporting all efforts to ensure peace and stability in the region.

In closing, allow me to express my appreciation to First Admiral Dato Seri Pahlawan Hj Abd Halim Hj Mohammad Hanifah, Commander of the Royal Brunei Navy for inviting me to address this very important Meeting.

With that, with kalimah “Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim” it is an honour and privilege to officiate the 6th ASEAN Chief of Navy Meeting 2012.

Thank you, and I wish you well and a fruitful discussion in your meeting today.

Wabillahit Taufiq Walhidayah Wassalamu’alaikum Warahmatullahi Ta’ala Wabarakatuh.