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DEPUTY MINISTER OF DEFENCE

AT THE

CHIEFS OF DEFENSE (CHOD) ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2014

Theme: 'Multilateralism: Practical Cooperation towards Shared Responsibilities'

TUESDAY, 4 NOVEMBER 2014 / 11 MUHARRAM 1436

INDERA SAMUDERA HALL 1

THE EMPIRE HOTEL AND COUNTRY CLUB

JERUDONG

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Alhamdulillah Rabbil 'Alamin, Wassalatu Wassalamu 'Ala Asyrafil Anbiya'i Wal Mursalin,
Sayyidina Muhammadin Wa'ala Alihi Wa Sohbihi Ajma'in.
Rabbi Syrahli Syadri, Wa Yassirli 'Amri, Wahlul Uqdatam Millisani, Yaf Qahu Qauli.

Distinguished Chiefs of Defence Forces... and Representatives... Ladies and Gentlemen.

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

And a very good morning.

At the outset, I wish to extend a very warm welcome to the Chiefs of Defence Forces and Representatives to Brunei Darussalam. We are indeed very honoured to co-host this Annual Chiefs of Defence Conference (CHOD) for the first time.

As one of the largest gathering of military leaders in the Asia Pacific, I see your presence today is very significant in building wider friendship among you. For that, I would also like to specially welcome our friends from China, participating for the first time.

I hope the tranquillity and scenic landscape of the Empire Hotel will inspire you to develop closer cooperation and personal relationships. Stories have it that it was here when the idea of a Free Trade Area was first mooted between the APEC leaders in 2000.

This morning, I would just like to offer an overview on defence cooperation in the context multilateral diplomacy in the region.

Diplomacy from my own experience is about consultation and cooperation, about creating values in the relations among nations on the basis of mutual benefits, contributing towards each others' economic and social progress.

Defence, on the other hand has always been an important dimension in multilateralism. It reinforces the fundamental notion and principles of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and the lofty objectives of maintaining peace, security and stability.

As one of the oldest reigning Sultanate, Brunei Darussalam has a long history of defence and diplomatic relations with many countries. According to some accounts, as far back as the 14th century pre-colonial era, Brunei Darussalam entered into tributary relationship with China that accorded her special relationship and trade privileges. In 1845 USS Constitution visited Brunei Darussalam, and by 1850, we signed the Treaty of Peace, Friendship, Commerce and Navigation with the United States.

For almost a century since 1888 Brunei Darussalam came under the British Protection. But not until 1965, when Brunei Darussalam officially formed its own armed forces and immediately established defence cooperation with a number of countries including the United Kingdom, Malaysia and Singapore.

Prior to taking full responsibility of our independence in 1984, we entered into a garrison agreement and a treaty of friendship and cooperation with the United Kingdom signed in 1979. This arrangement continued until today and served the best interests of both countries.

The ensuing Cold War has changed the political and security landscape of the region. ASEAN and the Non-Aligned Movement were established, bringing the member countries together in their common endeavours to promote peace, independence and cooperation.

Hence, multilateralism evolved in accordance with our national and regional imperatives bringing greater benefits and elevating cooperation to greater heights.

Multilateralism in defence is more vital now as we live in a globalised world.

Globalisation, in particular, will impact in the way we conduct our relations. As we create more values and opportunities in the interdependent world, more will be at stake for us. We begin to see bigger challenges such as what we now know as contagion effect, Black Swans, transnational issues and many others. Globalisation, without states relations can potentially undermine our values, social progress, human rights, regional unity, and development.

Through history, we have seen a range of policy options for multilateralism in defence diplomacy, from practical cooperation of building friendships, of training and military exercises, into forming defence arrangements such as the Five Power Defence Arrangement, to advocating military alliances such as NATO and the Warsaw pact, and to embracing common defence policies and common security by groups of countries.

This is how I see the relevance of ASEAN's defence diplomacy. ASEAN has always been at the forefront of multilateralism, and has long recognised the importance of defence cooperation in addressing ASEAN's security challenges.

The convening of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting in Kuala Lumpur in 2005, was an important milestone, but only came 40 years after ASEAN was formed. The journey to reaching the destination, of building trust and confidence, however, was long and intricate and perhaps a bit tricky.

The challenge for us was to build comfort level, mutual trust and confidence and personal friendships.

I recalled before then, defence officials were encouraged to come together during ASEAN meetings simply to know each other and to develop friendships. The defence officials interactions and lunches held on the sidelines of ASEAN meetings were instrumental in raising the comfort level among them. The ASEAN militaries also embarked on their own initiative of holding informal meetings at the Chiefs of Defence and Chiefs of Services level.

The close networks also resulted in the establishment of the ARF Defence Officials' Dialogue in 2002 and the annual ARF Security Policy Conference convened in 2004. All these developments and efforts are instrumental in bringing defence and military officials together in their common desire to promote cooperation in defence.

Today, ASEAN relations have become more valuable now than ever before, especially as this cooperation will be cemented with the formation of ASEAN Charter and the creation of ASEAN Political Security Community.

Dialogue and Consensus remain as the main thrust of ASEAN defence diplomacy while maintaining pace and comfort level as a measure to success.

ASEAN has always been well aware of the differences and the conflicts that exist among member countries. However, ASEAN has deemed it important to focus primarily on promoting economic growth, social progress and cultural development and to promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and international law and adherence to the United Nations Charter.

ASEAN's growing interdependence and advocacy towards open regionalism have also highlighted the need to address the wider security challenges in collaborations with the regional countries.

ASEAN's success and its centrality in the pursuit of continued stability and prosperity is dependent on the progress of surrounding neighbours, friends and partners, including the stable relationships among the big powers.

ASEAN defence diplomacy can be described as those progressing under the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting, the ASEAN Chiefs of Defence Forces Informal Meeting, the ARF Defence Officials' Dialogue and all other related meetings.

They fit in with the principles and purposes of the ASEAN Charter and ASEAN's desire to realise ASEAN community by 2015.

The leaders have declared for a “shared commitment and collective responsibility in enhancing regional peace, security and prosperity” and that Member Countries shall “respond effectively, in accordance with the principle of comprehensive security, to *all* forms of threats, transnational crimes and trans-boundary challenges”.

The ADMM as a forum has made significant progress in bringing the defence and military officials and Ministers closer in the process of dialogue and consultation, and in looking at the spectrum of security issues facing ASEAN.

The changes in the nature of our security threats subsequently saw a growing need for ASEAN military leaders to take on non-traditional security challenges.

The relative speed at which the ADMM had engaged dialogue partners in the framework of ADMM-Plus was a reflection of the strategic importance of having an inclusive regional security architecture with ASEAN playing a central role.

We believe, with the common desire to work together, the region is able to tap into larger pool of resources, and make remarkable contribution in addressing today’s non-traditional security challenges. Particularly, in moving forward the agreed areas of practical cooperation on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, maritime security, military medicine, counter-terrorism, peacekeeping operations and humanitarian mine action.

With all this in place, we see both defence and diplomacy at work – and shall I say, in “full swing” – with the ADMM as an integral part of ASEAN process.

This brings me to my last point on the future prospects of defence diplomacy.

I am pleased to note that cooperation in peace support activities or Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) will be among the important topics discussed by the conference today.

The value of MOOTW rests in its actual practice of preventing conflict. It encapsulates the whole notion of preventive diplomacy and all its aspects.

It represents an important component in peace keeping and peace building with a view to preventing crisis from escalating into violent conflict and provides a conducive and enabling environment for further peacemaking efforts.

A number of countries represented here, I am sure have been involved in peace keeping operations, such as those under the UN umbrella and multinational operation in Aceh, Southern Philippines, and Cambodia. They include a broad range of assistance varying from security, rehabilitation and development, socio-economic recovery and civilian protection.

We also have a good history of helping one another. Countries in the region have been quick to respond and offer assistance where needed such as the experience of Tsunami in Indonesia and Japan and more recently the typhoon in the Philippines.

The inaugural HADR and Military Medicine exercise that brought together all the defence forces of the ADMM-Plus countries was a strong evidence of the extraordinary level of goodwill that our militaries have demonstrated in their readiness to help people in times of need.

Given the political will, the potential for defence cooperation remains vast. There has been 'no lack of goodwill and determination to progress'.

This is where I strongly feel the value of CHOD as a unique gathering of senior military leaders.

With the delegations coming with different perspectives, it is easy to find differences of opinions on many issues.

But the essence of multilateralism is to clearly understand and appreciate these differences and work towards establishing the close friendships that would be of value for developing meaningful cooperation in the future.

So in closing, I hope you will take this exceptional opportunity to know each other better, meet new acquaintances, establish networks, perhaps, even call each other on first name basis.

I wish you well in your discussions and may you bring back with you a lasting memory of friendship and cooperation. Thank you for attention.

Wabillahit Taufik Walhidayah Wassalamu'alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakaatuh.