

15th ADMM, 15 June 2021

OPENING REMARKS BY CHAIRMAN

Respected colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh, and a very good morning.

At the outset, please allow me, to convey warmest regards, from His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Muizzaddin Waddaulah ibni Almarhum Sultan Haji Omar Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, to all the ministers present today, as well as His Majesty's best wishes, for a fruitful Meeting.

It is indeed an honour and a pleasure for me, to represent Brunei Darussalam as Chair of the 15th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting. And I warmly welcome, each one of you, to this meaningful milestone meeting, despite our modalities, of holding the ADMM virtually once again.

Respected colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

I was hopeful of welcoming all of you, to our humble Abode of Peace and convening our meeting, in better circumstances. More than a year, since ADMM met, for the Retreat in Hanoi, and we still have yet to be presented, with the opportunity to meet physically. The pandemic has a profound impact, in shaping the discourse, of our engagement. At the same time, it revealed the work we need to do, to ensure our region remains resilient, cohesive and future-ready, for the challenges ahead of us.

It would also be remiss of me, not to mention the grave loss of lives resulting from this pandemic, and its after-effects, that are nothing short of unrelenting.

Despite this, I am confident that, our cooperation can be further strengthened and advanced, especially after witnessing, the unwavering spirit of cooperation, since the pandemic gained a foothold in our region. We are

continuing to adapt, the best we can, collectively facing the challenge head-on, and today's 15th ADMM, is a solid statement of that.

As the Chair of ASEAN 2021, Brunei Darussalam bears the theme, "We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper". In sustaining the efforts that ASEAN has made, till the present, we look, to these three key priorities:

- Harness the caring nature of ASEAN, to build a harmonious and resilient community, with its people at the centre;

- Prepare and adapt for the future, to ensure ASEAN, remains relevant and its people take advantage, of new opportunities, as well as overcome existing and future challenges, and;

- Create opportunities, for all to benefit through initiatives, that enhance the sustainable prosperity of the region.

With ADMM in its 15th year, it is high time for us, to reflect on what our efforts have achieved, and explore ways, to enhance our initiatives and processes. I believe that ADMM, as the highest defence consultative and cooperative mechanism in ASEAN, can do and achieve more.

We believe this can be done, through becoming more strategic in our orientation and approach, even more so, as we aim to make our initiatives sustainable, in the long run, and bring about, the lasting impact to the ASEAN Community, notably through effective cross- sectoral and cross-pillar coordination.

On that note, I am pleased that, the initiatives within the ADMM process since the defence sector, began its work this year in February, they have reflected, these priorities so well.

I remain just as hopeful, for a productive and successful meeting to further advance our region's defence cooperation, for the collective good of the region.

Thank you.