

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT OF  
THE TRACK II NETWORK OF ASEAN DEFENCE AND SECURITY INSTITUTIONS  
(NADI) MEETING ON "CONFLICTS AFFECTING THE REGION, AND THE  
ADMM/ADMM-PLUS' ROLE IN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT"  
4-7 November 2024  
Singapore**

1. The Track II Network of ASEAN Defence and Security Institutions (NADI) Meeting on "Conflicts Affecting the Region, and the ADMM/ADMM-Plus' Role in Conflict Prevention and Management" was organised by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, from 4 to 7 November 2024.
2. Representatives from Brunei Darussalam, Kingdom of Cambodia, Republic of Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Republic of the Philippines, Republic of Singapore, Kingdom of Thailand, and Socialist Republic of Viet Nam attended the Workshop. The list of participants is attached in Annex I. Ambassador Ong Keng Yong, Executive Deputy Chairman, RSIS, and Mr Lawrence Anderson, Senior Fellow, RSIS, chaired the Meeting.

**Opening Remarks by Ambassador Ong Keng Yong, Executive Deputy Chairman, RSIS; and Chairman of the NADI Workshop**

3. Ambassador Ong Keng Yong warmly welcomed the keynote speaker and all delegations to the NADI Meeting. He emphasised the timeliness of this Meeting, given the mounting strategic rivalry between the US and China. He reminded delegates that the results of the US Presidential Election would have implications for Southeast Asia and the wider Indo-Pacific region. Ambassador Ong highlighted that many hotspots in the region could blow up into more serious conflict.
4. Ambassador Ong underscored that any conflict in East and Southeast Asia will adversely affect ASEAN Member States (AMS). As such, it was imperative that AMS look seriously at how to minimise the risk of conflicts. The ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) could act as a platform for defence chiefs to consider these pressing issues and pre-emptively figure out ways to defuse tensions. He urged participants at this Meeting to discuss substantively how conflict may be prevented or managed, and which mechanisms will be best suited to deal with such challenges.

**Adoption of Agenda**

5. The Meeting adopted the agenda and the programme, which are appended in Annex II and Annex III respectively.

**Keynote Speaker: Ms Elizabeth Tan, Director (ASEAN), Defence Policy Office, Defence Policy Group, Ministry of Defence, Singapore**

6. In her keynote address, Ms Elizabeth Tan, Director (ASEAN) in the Ministry of Defence Singapore, extended a warm welcome to the NADI delegates and introduced two main messages: “Start Now” and “Start with NADI.” Under “Start Now”, she emphasised the timeliness of the meeting, as ASEAN was undergoing a period of review for its post-2025 strategy. Growing tensions both within and beyond the region also signalled urgency for ASEAN to seriously discuss conflict prevention and management measures. Ms Tan then called upon NADI members to ride the current coattails of change, and develop clear, innovative, and practicable actions the ADMM and ADMM-Plus could take through the meeting.
7. Under “Start with NADI”, Ms Tan noted that NADI was established in 2007 to create a space for policy analysts, academics and defence officials to discuss security issues beyond their governments’ positions. NADI has since provided the ADMM and ADMM-Plus with insights and recommendations that have translated into initiatives undertaken by the platforms, demonstrating NADI’s value in providing forward-looking perspectives. She emphasised that ASEAN must work together to preserve our shared regional interests, prevent conflict from happening in or spilling into the region, and ensure that ASEAN is united and resilient in the face of such conflict.

## **SESSION I**

### **Brunei Darussalam**

**Presentation by Ms Siti Diana Othman, Research Officer, Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Ministry of Defence, Brunei Darussalam**

8. In her presentation, Ms Siti Diana Othman discussed the security challenges posed by climate change in Southeast Asia, highlighting its role as a threat multiplier that exacerbated existing vulnerabilities across the region. Climate change was increasingly recognised as a significant driver of conflict, with both direct and indirect impacts on security dynamics globally. The presentation outlined several pathways through which climate-induced environmental stress can lead to conflict. These included cross-border conflicts triggered by issues such as transboundary pollution, competition over resources like fisheries in contested waters, economic disputes from trade restrictions, and localised military skirmishes over strategic assets like oil reserves.
9. The interplay between environmental stress, resource scarcity, political and social dynamics and geopolitics emphasised the urgent need for cooperative strategies and conflict prevention measures to address the multifaceted challenges posed by climate change. A number of recommendations put forward for consideration by the ADMM and ADMM-Plus are as follows:

- a. Climate Change as a Basis for Cooperation. Leveraging climate change as an issue of shared concern can foster cooperation among ADMM and ADMM-Plus, by undertaking climate action agreements, joint research initiatives and organising dialogues and workshops.
- b. Green Policies. Incorporating climate change considerations into the defence strategies was essential for enhancing regional security and resilience, including developing climate-informed defence strategies, adopting sustainable military practices, strengthening civil-military coordination and conducting joint training and exercise.
- c. Environmental Peacebuilding. Promoting peace by integrating climate change considerations into practical conflict resolution efforts through incorporating climate factors into peace negotiations, supporting community-based resource management, investing in capacity building for climate adaptation and establishing a monitoring mechanism to monitor the effectiveness of climate interventions on peace and security.

## **Kingdom of Cambodia**

### **Presentation by Lieutenant General Nem Sowathey, Deputy Director General, General Department of Policy and Foreign Affairs, Director of Sena Techo Unit, Ministry of National Defence, Kingdom of Cambodia**

10. Lieutenant General Nem Sowathey underscored that ASEAN lies in the heart of the region's geopolitics and strategic dynamics playing active and pivotal role in trade, economy and the international order. The maritime boundary disputes in the South China Sea remain a significant challenge, driven by major power rivalries, energy security concerns, and the potential for an arms race in the region. Cybersecurity has also emerged as a critical focus amid rising tensions and cybercrime threats in Southeast Asia. Ultimately, the rivalry between major power over competing influence, economic interests, military alliances, and political ideologies continues to shape the region's security dynamics.
11. At the same time as this scenario is likely to produce a prolonged period of tension and competition, as countries are forced to navigate complex relationships with both powers, potentially creating a regional environment of mistrust and instability. Instead of direct conflict, Southeast Asia would experience "grey-zone" confrontations, economic competition, cyber threats, and political influence operations all of which could hinder development and regional unity. The cumulative impact of these factors could be a more divided, loss of autonomy and less cooperative in Southeast Asia, where countries struggle to maintain balance and neutrality, centrality and potentially hindering the region's long-term development, peace and stability.
12. The complexities of conflict affecting Southeast Asia underscore the critical need for robust mechanisms for conflict prevention and management. The ADMM and ADMM-Plus stand at the forefront of these efforts, serving as essential platforms for dialogue, cooperation, and regional stability. The enhancement of regional cooperation through military exercises, information sharing, and capacity-

building initiatives can significantly bolster trust among member states. By promoting people-to-people diplomacy and economic integration, countries can further bridge divides and create a network of interdependence that reduces the likelihood of conflict. ASEAN must prioritise its political principles and maintain a neutral stance rather than aligning with one side. The regional geopolitical landscape and foreign policy should be centred on the principle of ASEAN Centrality and grounded in international law and frameworks to ensure mutual political stability and incentivize cooperation among the people in the region.

13. As Southeast Asia navigates its unique security landscape, the proactive engagement of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus in conflict prevention and management is essential. By prioritising diplomatic efforts, upholding international law, and fostering inclusive dialogue, these frameworks can contribute to a more peaceful and stable region. Ultimately, a united approach to addressing conflicts will not only safeguard the interests of Southeast Asian nations but will also promote a climate of cooperation and resilience in the face of future challenges.

### **Republic of Indonesia**

#### **Presentation by First Admiral Dr Antonius Widyoutomo, SH., M.Tr.Opsla, Director of Strategic Studies, Center for Strategic Studies, Research and Development, Tentara Nasional Indonesia**

14. First Admiral Antonius Widyoutomo presented the pressing security challenges posed by ongoing tensions in the South China Sea, highlighting the strategic significance of this region for Southeast Asia's stability. His analysis pointed to China's expansive territorial claims, marked by the "nine-dash line" and increased military presence, as critical factors intensifying disputes, particularly with nations like the Philippines. The recent clash between the Philippine and Chinese coast guards at the Second Thomas Shoal illustrated the heightened risk of unintended confrontations. In response, ASEAN continued to advocate for peaceful resolutions based on international law, especially the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS 1982), and remained committed to practical confidence-building measures (CBMs), including the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES) and the Guidelines for Air Military Encounters (GAME), to reduce the potential for conflict escalation.
15. Under his recommendations, the ADMM and ADMM-Plus were encouraged to expand the implementation of CBMs, prioritising joint maritime patrols, intelligence sharing, and comprehensive joint exercises involving AMS and key partners like the United States. ASEAN nations directly impacted by the South China Sea disputes should leverage ASEAN forums to unify policies and engage diplomatically with external powers. The ADMM-Plus, therefore, served as a pivotal platform to strengthen dialogue, foster mutual trust, and advance cooperative efforts aimed at sustaining regional peace in accordance with international norms, safeguarding the sovereignty and stability of Southeast Asia.

## **Lao People's Democratic Republic**

### **Presentation by Brigadier General Viengxay Somvichith, Director General, Military Science and History Department, Ministry of National Defence, Lao PDR**

16. Brigadier General Viengxay Somvichith assumed that major power rivalry, and food and energy resource shortages could potentially lead to a conflict in the region. He justified that major power rivalry had become a tangible security issue affecting the region thanks to the fact that in recent years, many disputes between major countries could be witnessed and played out in many instances. These included trade warfare and economic sanctions imposed against other countries, criticism and accusation against one another of creating a new cold war, multipolarity, hypocrisy and hegemony, arms race, and putting pressure on countries to take sides. He also predicted that another conflict that could potentially arise would be rooted from the shortages of food and energy resources due to many critical and complex factors, particularly the effects of potential conflicts, economic sanctions and the rise in cost of living, and consumption of food and energy resources, climate-related and other natural disasters, among others.
17. He shared his views that the two potential issues could affect ASEAN Centrality and unity and the degree to which some ASEAN initiatives, fundamental principles and guidelines were carried out in an effective manner, including the possibility of some division and segregation among others in the region. In this connection, he was of the view that whether or not these so-called circumstances would occur in the future, ASEAN should not remain idle and needed to work closely and be well-prepared to strategically respond to such potential scenarios. Thus, ASEAN could contribute to the maintenance of regional peace, security and resilience.

## **Malaysia**

### **Presentation by Major General Dato' Haji Ya'cob Bin Haji Samiran, Chief Executive, Malaysian Institute of Defence and Security**

18. Major General Dato' Haji Ya'cob Bin Haji Samiran underscored that the Rohingya crisis has become a significant regional security challenge, with Malaysia hosting around 190,000 refugees, with Rohingyas constituting over half of the population. The crisis presented threats to regional stability, including radicalisation and extremist recruitment. Host countries, like Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia, faced challenges in managing refugee populations while maintaining social cohesion. ASEAN had to balance humanitarian obligations with security imperatives. Considering the region's geographical location within the Ring of Fire and geopolitical competition, the security of undersea cables is crucial for regional economic stability and national security. The 2019 ASEAN Guidelines for Strengthening Resilience and Repair of Submarine Cables were a positive step, but their effectiveness was limited by non-binding nature and variations in national interpretation.
19. The paper proposed three recommendations for ASEAN to address the Rohingya crisis and undersea cable security. The first is to establish an ASEAN

Integrated Crisis Response Framework, which will create standardised protocols for humanitarian assistance, coordinate security measures for refugee populations, develop regional early warning systems, and facilitate information sharing among AMS. The second is to institute a Comprehensive Maritime Infrastructure Protection Strategy, which will create joint monitoring and response capabilities, public-private partnerships, standardised protection protocols, and regular security assessments. The third recommendation is to enhance regional capacity building by strengthening military and civilian agency capabilities, developing specialised training programmes, fostering technical expertise in infrastructure protection, and creating unified reporting mechanisms. The report emphasised the need for sustained political commitment, adequate resources, regular evaluation and adjustment of strategies, and enhanced cooperation with international partners.

## **Republic of the Philippines**

### **Presentation by Mr Vince Andre C Sabellon, Defense Research Officer II, National Defense College of the Philippines**

20. Mr Vince Andre Sabellon discussed how the South China Sea remained a flashpoint for potential conflict. The great power rivalry between the United States and China amplified the South China Sea issue because of China's aggressive tactics, asserting their illegal claims through the 10-dashed line. Formerly dubbed as grey zone operations, the actions of China were better described as ICAD (illegal, coercive, aggressive, and deceptive), which could be observed through China's island-building, maritime confrontations with neighbouring states, and denial of access to states' Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ). Mr. Sabellon further elaborated on how this might escalate into a conflict. Southeast Asian nations, particularly those with overlapping claims like the Philippines, were caught in a challenging position because of the intricacies of balancing deterrence efforts without inciting further escalation. The increased US presence through strengthened regional alliances had also amplified China's aggressive tactics, placing ASEAN in a delicate position.
21. Considering the complex security challenges in the South China Sea, Mr Sabellon presented several recommendations for ADMM. First, to emphasise ASEAN's regional unity and resilience, a binding Code of Conduct had to be established to set shared standards to help manage the conflict in the South China Sea. Second, it was also recommended that there must be a standard Rules of Engagement (ROE) to not only signal ASEAN's commitment to lawful resolution but also to prevent escalations during confrontations at sea. Third, Mr Sabellon also recommended the conduct of regional patrols and exercises, as they demonstrated ASEAN's commitment to international law and deter unauthorised activities in disputed waters. As the situation in the South China Sea continued to evolve, ASEAN's collective actions would be crucial for maintaining stability and upholding international norms in the face of China's assertive regional strategy.

## **SESSION II**

### **Republic of Indonesia**

#### **Presentation by Dr Almuchalif Suryo, Head of Total War Study Program, Republic of Indonesia Defense University**

22. Dr Almuchalif Suryo indicated that the manifestation of cooperation within ASEAN was directed towards efforts by individual countries to peacefully resolve conflicts while also striving to create a shared understanding of various potential threats facing the region, including both traditional and non-traditional threats. ASEAN's common interest is centred on peace and stability. Therefore, to encourage de-escalation and prevent the conflict from happening, AMS should prioritise the integration of AOIP principles into all regional mechanisms, ensuring that policies reflected ASEAN Centrality, openness, transparency, inclusiveness, and respect for sovereignty.
23. ASEAN should actively explore and enhance mechanisms such as ADMM and ADMM-Plus to tackle transnational threats, fostering a collaborative approach to security challenges. AMS should also invest in joint military exercises and capacity-building initiatives to foster trust and enhance military cooperation, reflecting a commitment to regional peace and stability.

### **Malaysia**

#### **Presentation by Lieutenant General (Retired) Fadzil Mokhtar, Academic Fellow, Centre for Defence and International Security Studies (CDISS), National Defence University of Malaysia (NDUM)**

24. Lieutenant General (Retired) Fadzil Mokhtar highlighted that ASEAN had a fundamental interest in fostering regional peace and stability as well as a rules-based regional order. While the likelihood of war breaking out between AMS was low, challenges were being posed by territorial and maritime disputes in the South China Sea, with heightened prospect of an incident escalating to open conflict, and by climate change, which could contribute to regional instability. ADMM had in place several conflict prevention measures and risk reduction initiatives to prevent escalation of incidents. Additionally, the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Groups (EWG) on HADR and Maritime Security could be utilised to mitigate the consequences of conflict. Equally important were dialogues and communication among defence and military officials which prevented the door to de-escalation from being closed. However, mechanisms related to climate change were not as expansive and ADMM's capacity to respond to large scale disasters and the acutely declining ocean health in the South China Sea was limited.
25. Admittedly, more building blocks were needed to complement existing measures. One of the ways was to move the South China Sea from the existing state of negative peace to a situation of stable peace, in which even the possibility of war was extremely remote. This could be achieved if the COC were finalised. The ADMM could play a supporting role by soliciting China's cooperation to bring the

protracted COC's negotiations to a conclusion. Moreover, other direct preventive measures like identification of risks, early warning system, joint patrol of the heavily-trafficked waters, or more regular military-to military exchanges could be explored. ADMM should also consider establishing a Standby Team of Mediators who could be rapidly deployed to dampen tensions and control conflict from spiralling. With respect to climate change, an EWG on Climate Security might be timely to foster greater cooperation among militaries for disaster response, intelligence collection and climate change mitigation.

## **Republic of the Union of Myanmar**

### **Presentation by Major General Aung Myo Thant, Deputy Chief of Armed Forces Training, Office of the Chief of Armed Forces Training (OCAFT), Republic of the Union of Myanmar**

26. Major General Aung Myo Thant underscored the crucial role of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus as key platforms for conflict prevention and management in Southeast Asia. The ADMM facilitated defence cooperation through confidence-building measures, direct communication channels, and collaborative initiatives, such as the ASEAN Militaries Ready Group for disaster response. These measures enhanced trust and helped to avert misunderstandings that could escalate into conflicts. Meanwhile, the ADMM-Plus bolstered regional security cooperation through joint military exercises and expert working groups focused on critical areas, including maritime security, counter-terrorism, and cybersecurity. Together, the ADMM and ADMM-Plus contributed significantly to fostering peace and stability across the region.
27. However, Major General Aung Myo Thant noted that ASEAN faced an array of potential conflicts, such as territorial disputes in the South China Sea, internal ethnic and religious tensions, non-traditional security threats, and intensifying competition between major powers. While the ADMM and ADMM-Plus are well-positioned to address these issues through dialogue, cooperation, and real-time communication, the evolving security landscape of the region necessitated new initiatives. Strengthening cooperation on cybersecurity, advancing climate security measures, and enhancing conflict mediation mechanisms are key areas where the ADMM and ADMM-Plus could expand their impact. By adapting to emerging challenges, ASEAN could more effectively sustain regional stability and peace.

## **Republic of The Philippines**

### **Presentation by Brigadier Joel M Paloma PA, Chief, Office for Strategic Studies and Strategy Management, Armed Forces of the Philippines**

28. The presentation of Brigadier General Joel M Paloma began by addressing the evolving threat of cognitive warfare, which targeted the human mind to influence perceptions and behaviours, thereby posing a significant risk to ASEAN's stability. He underscored that cognitive warfare went beyond traditional methods, impacting not only military forces but entire societies. ASEAN should proactively safeguard the rules-based international order and uphold regional security to



tackle this threat. Brigadier General Paloma suggested establishing an information-sharing platform within the ADMM and ADMM-Plus focused on cognitive threats. This included adopting a fact-checking committee to counter misinformation and raising awareness through educational campaigns for military personnel. Integrating cognitive warfare scenarios into joint training exercises could also enhance mental resilience. Furthermore, he recommended leveraging existing frameworks like the ASEAN Cybersecurity and Information Centre of Excellence (ACICE) and the ASEAN Centre of Military Medicine (ACMM) to expand their mandate, develop early warning systems, and strengthen mental resilience.

29. In conclusion, Brigadier General Paloma emphasised a norms-based approach to protect ASEAN's unity and regional stability against cognitive warfare. ASEAN should bolster psychological resilience by enhancing information-sharing mechanisms, conducting educational initiatives, and utilising ADMM/ADMM-Plus frameworks like ACICE and ACMM. He also advocated establishing a specialised task force within ACICE and ACMM to design protocols reinforcing mental resilience against disinformation and propaganda. This approach fostered a dedicated regional research network to develop counter-narratives tailored to ASEAN's diverse landscape. By adopting a holistic and forward-looking strategy, ASEAN could effectively safeguard regional security and unity amidst the challenges posed by cognitive warfare.

## **Republic of Singapore**

### **Presentation by Mr Muhammad Faizal Bin Abdul Rahman, Research Fellow, Regional Security Architecture Programme, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore**

30. In his presentation, Mr Muhammad Faizal Bin Abdul Rahman elaborated that ASEAN leaders at the ASEAN Summit in October 2024 discussed five regional and international issues of common interest to the ASEAN political security community. The complexity of these issues challenged the organisation's cohesion and effectiveness, which the organisation needed for its community-building efforts and to continue being a cornerstone of its member countries' foreign policies.
31. Mr Faizal recommended that it might be more practicable for ASEAN to reflect on whether existing mechanisms could be better utilised and adapted to suit the unique circumstances of each regional security issue. First, diplomatic mechanisms, such as the ARF and the High Council of the TAC, could help ASEAN de-escalate tensions and prevent conflict from happening. ASEAN should examine how it could enhance some of these mechanisms to focus on the results as much as the processes. Second, the ADMM/ADMM-Plus should maintain cooperation in areas that could bolster the resilience required to face spillover effects if a conflict happens in Southeast Asia. For example, it might be possible for ASEAN defence agencies to use the ASEAN Militaries Ready Group on HADR to manage humanitarian crises arising from a conflict. The ASEAN Direct Communications Infrastructure (ADI) could maintain military-to-military

communications and prevent misunderstandings between ASEAN countries if the fog of conflict came with the spillover effects.

### **Kingdom of Thailand**

#### **Group Captain Chaiya Okdaeng, Deputy Director, Strategic Studies Center, National Defence Studies Institute, Royal Thai Armed Forces Headquarters**

32. The presentation by Group Captain Chaiya Okdaeng focused on the regional conflicts from cyber warfare and information campaigns. The ADMM was established to foster regional security cooperation, while the ADMM-Plus included dialogue partners to enhance security dialogues beyond ASEAN's borders. The mechanisms in place focused on conflict prevention through dialogue and diplomacy, as well as crisis management through joint military exercises and frameworks for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. However, challenges remained, such as diverse national interests among member states, resource constraints, and the need for adaptation to new threats, particularly those related to cyber warfare and information campaigns.
33. Despite existing frameworks, ASEAN's current mechanisms have struggled to effectively address the evolving nature of cyber threats and disinformation. The lack of agility in responding to these rapid developments highlighted the need for a more robust and coordinated approach. Member states shared common interests, including maintaining regional stability, protecting critical infrastructure, and ensuring political sovereignty against external interference. By collaboratively addressing these threats, ASEAN could strengthen regional resilience and promote a secure environment for all member states.
34. To enhance their effectiveness, ADMM and ADMM-Plus should consider implementing new mechanisms such as a Cybersecurity Incident Response Centre to coordinate responses to cyber incidents, and a Regional Cybersecurity Advisory Committee to share intelligence and best practices. Establishing a Cyber Threat Intelligence Sharing Platform and engaging in public-private partnerships would further bolster regional cybersecurity efforts. Additionally, launching cybersecurity awareness campaigns and hosting annual forums could promote collaboration and enhance public understanding of digital threats. By exploring these innovative strategies, ADMM and ADMM-Plus could better equip ASEAN to manage the challenges posed by cyber and information campaigns, ultimately ensuring a more secure and resilient region.

### **Socialist Republic of Viet Nam**

#### **Presentation by Senior Colonel Vu Cao Dinh, Deputy Head, Division of International Studies, Institute for Defence Strategy, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam**

35. Senior Colonel Vu Cao Dinh highlighted that Southeast Asia occupied a crucial geostrategic position, which linked the Asian continent and Indian Ocean with the Pacific Ocean, as well as Northeast Asia with the South Pacific. The region and ASEAN played an increasingly vital role in the security and development of

many countries in the region and beyond, becoming focal points for engagement, influence, and competition among major powers. Although the current security environment in Southeast Asia was generally stable, there remain hotspots and non-traditional security challenges that potentially lead to conflict. The ADMM and the ADMM-Plus must continue to be pivotal cooperation mechanisms for conflict prevention and management through inter alia promoting dialogue, trust, transparency in defence policy, and practical activities such as education, training, exercises, and intelligence sharing.

36. In the evolving political and security environment, ADMM and ADMM-Plus should further leverage their role in conflict prevention and management in the region to foster trust and mutual understanding among ASEAN militaries and their partners. These included promoting effective, substantive cooperation to address common security challenges in the region, especially the non-traditional ones, encourage other countries to comply with the CUES and the GAME, explore the possibility of creating an early warning network, a centre of conflict and dispute resolution, and a regional peacekeeping force, and establish humanitarian corridors in case of conflict.

### **Exchange of Views**

37. Minilateral arrangements could be seen as an indirect criticism of ASEAN effectiveness. But they could be seen as having positive and negative impact on ASEAN. It was up to ASEAN to examine how engagement between ADMM/ADMM-Plus and minilaterals are done in a collaborative way and did not conflict with ASEAN's interests.
38. On climate change, there could be value for ADMM/ADMM-Plus to collaborate and share information with local governments on climate management since they were often the first responders to climate-induced humanitarian crises. ASEAN could also initiate discussions on the legal impact of climate change on the sovereign rights of coastal states.
39. On the Myanmar crisis, it was critical to acknowledge the humanitarian aspect of the crisis aside from differing terminologies, and how the humanitarian crisis affects other countries in Southeast Asia. While Myanmar works to resolve its internal conflict, it is also crucial for the ASEAN community to engage constructively in crisis management process.
40. The protection and resilience of undersea cables are crucial to regional economic stability and national security. AMS should work with their counterparts in the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP), as CSCAP has established a study group on undersea data cables.
41. It would be more accurate to describe developments in the South China Sea as "territorial and maritime disputes" instead of "territorial disputes" as the issues involved the conduct of maritime behaviour in addition to territorial claims.

42. The 1972 Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collision at Sea (COLREGS), among others, is a key document that contains specific provisions that may help promote good behaviour of vessels at sea and avoid tension.
43. Cyber-attacks and disinformation campaigns were integral features of modern-day conflict and competition. Even if the US-China strategic competition does not develop into a hot war, tensions were likely to continue and impact AMS in the form of cyber and disinformation campaigns.

## **Recommendations**

44. In reaffirming the principle of ASEAN Centrality, ADMM/ADMM-Plus should make use of the AOIP to manage the differences between ASEAN and its dialogue partners regarding the strategic significance of the Indo-Pacific, as well as serve as an ASEAN framework to tie numerous ASEAN initiatives together under a single canvass to address the various Indo-Pacific strategies and policies of the US, Japan and several European countries.
45. ASEAN could better utilise and adapt existing mechanisms for confidence building, conflict prevention and management in the region. ADMM-Plus should maintain cooperation in areas, such as humanitarian assistance and communications, that could bolster the resilience needed to face spillover effects of conflict in Southeast Asia. ADMM-Plus and the ARF could be useful platforms to reengage North Korea at a time when Pyongyang's involvement in the Russia-Ukraine war has security implications for ASEAN and the Indo-Pacific region.
46. ADMM-Plus could serve as a forum to discuss policies and engage diplomatically on the South China Sea. This include developing softer and more creative approaches to solicit China's cooperation to mitigate tensions, abide by its obligations as a signatory of UNCLOS and conclude negotiations on an effective and substantive COC in accordance with universally recognised principles of international law.
47. ADMM-Plus should expand the implementation of trust and confidence building measures such as CUES, GAME, and ADI. This could involve more regular military-to-military exchanges, coordinated patrols and ASEAN-wide military exercises with key dialogue partners. to contribute to peace and security in the region.
48. ADMM-Plus could leverage existing mechanisms such as ACICE and ACMM which impacts the cognitive domain. AMS could also invest more in capacity-building initiatives to foster trust and enhance military cooperation to address the potential threats pertaining to cybersecurity and critical infrastructure such as undersea data cables.
49. ADMM-Plus should reaffirm the aspirations of the Declaration for a Decade of Coastal and Marine Environmental Protection in the South China Sea (2017 – 2027) between ASEAN and China.

## Other Matters

### *Forthcoming NADI Activities*

50. The meeting noted the updates on upcoming NADI activities:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Via</b>
28 April - 1 May 2025	Annual General Meeting	Malaysia, Genting Highlands	Physical
17 – 20 June 2025	Meeting	Philippines	Physical
25 – 28 August 2025	Meeting	Thailand	Physical
3 – 6 November / 10 – 13 November 2025	Meeting	Brunei Darussalam	Physical

## Concluding Remarks

51. The Chairman of the NADI Meeting extended his sincere appreciation and thanks to all the delegates for their participation in and constructive contribution to the Meeting.
52. The NADI delegates expressed their appreciation to RSIS for their hospitality and arrangements made for the NADI Meeting.