

# PRESS RELEASE

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Welcome Remarks of  
**Dr. ALBERTO G. ROMULO**  
Secretary of Foreign Affairs  
at the  
**2nd Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum  
Experts and Eminent Persons (ARF EEPs)**  
Manila, Philippines  
6 February 2007

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Experts and Eminent Persons of the ASEAN Regional Forum,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

As Chairman of the ARF, it is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to Manila for the Second Meeting of the ARF Experts and Eminent Persons.

I look forward to your invaluable expertise and contributions to help the ARF manage some of the most important regional security issues of our day.

The Philippines is also honored to co-host this meeting with the Republic of Korea, following the successful convening of the historic First Plenary Meeting of Experts and Eminent Persons held last year in Jeju Island.

At the 13th ARF in Kuala Lumpur in July, 2006, we received a useful briefing on Jeju. We noted your recommendations on ARF's future course, and on your role as ARF EEPs. We tasked our senior officials to submit an assessment of your recommendations to the 14th ARF Ministerial Meeting this coming August here in Manila.

Your current Meeting will assess the practicability of one of those recommendations, namely, "to mobilize the EEP resources to deliberate [on] salient regional security issues such as the Northeast Asia security dilemma and disarmament."

I await the results of your deliberations on this complex and difficult subject. You will cover, in this endeavor, traditional and non-traditional security issues, comparative experiences in regional security cooperation, and the enhancement of multilateral Northeast Asian security cooperation.

Indeed, your meeting is most timely, given the urgent and sensitive issue of denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula. A nuclear weapons-free Korean Peninsula is a top priority for the international community, and the Philippines and ASEAN back international efforts to achieve this end.

For this reason, we fully support both UN Security Council Resolutions 1718 and 1695, as well as diplomatic efforts to peacefully resolve this issue centered on the Six-Party Talks.

We also trust that H.E. Ban Ki Moon, as the new U.N. Secretary General, will be able to focus international efforts to resolve the Korean dilemma.

In this regard, the Philippines proposed during the 12th ASEAN Summit in Cebu last month, that your meeting should further complement existing diplomatic efforts to bring peace and stability in the region.

The Philippines also had the privilege of providing the venue for the Seventh Summit Meeting among the People's Republic of China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, which was held on the sidelines of the ASEAN Summit in Cebu.

This reflects the steady progress in cooperation between Northeast and Southeast Asia in the security and other fields. The Philippines, ASEAN, and ARF will continue to actively support dialogue and cooperation among countries in the region.

For its part, ARF is strengthening the level of mutual confidence and trust in our region. Hopefully, this will foster a climate to strengthen preventive diplomacy in an ARF context.

Philippine contributions towards this end include: the Register of ARF EEPs; promoting a more substantial role for the ARF Chair through the Friends of the ARF Chair mechanism; encouraging the publication of Annual Security Outlooks within ARF; enhancing Track 1 and Track 2 linkages in ARF; and developing links between ARF and other regional and international security organizations.

This also brings forward the realization of ASEAN's goal of building "One Caring and Sharing Community" through greater security and stability. During the ASEAN Summit in Cebu, our Leaders signed landmark documents to improve human security in the region. These included the ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism and the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers.

An ASEAN Security Community, therefore, is emerging that will resolutely confront a broad range of threats to our common safety and welfare, ranging from terrorism to human trafficking.

We should all be reassured by the commitment of ASEAN and the ARF to enhance regional security. I am sure that your meeting will be one major part of this larger endeavor.

Thank you very much and MABUHAY!