

Excellencies,

Since 1994, the ARF has been instrumental in forging closer cooperation in the Asia-Pacific in tackling regional security issues. With the focus being on non-traditional security issues, we have managed to expand the opportunities for dialogue and cooperation in the four priority areas, namely: disaster relief, counter-terrorism and transnational crime, non-proliferation and disarmament, and maritime security.

Our work in these priority areas have become even more significant, in light of how complex our regional security landscape has become.

Having experienced the impact of recent disasters and being the host of the ARF Voluntary Disaster Relief (VDR) Exercise in 2009, the Philippines views disaster relief initiatives such as the ARF Disaster Relief Exercise (ARF DiREx) held in Manado last March 2011 as vital in enhancing our readiness to respond to disasters. The Philippines looks forward to related future activities as well as opportunities for increased participation.

The Philippines also recognizes the importance of non-proliferation and disarmament in lessening the impact and reach of nuclear weapons and in promoting peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Hence, the Philippines looks forward to co-chairing the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (NPD) with Japan and Australia.

Excellencies,

We have witnessed, in the past year, two significant developments in the regional architecture, namely, (1) the expansion of the East Asia Summit (EAS) to include Russia and the United States, and (2) the launching of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus).

The Philippines welcomes these developments as these mechanisms provide more opportunities for cooperation among ASEAN Member States and dialogue partners.

On the expanded EAS, the Philippines views this as an opportunity to enhance activities, in line with the existing functional areas of cooperation, and its nature as a strategic and leaders-led forum.

The Philippines also views the ADMM-Plus framework as a significant contribution in ASEAN's efforts to promote regional cooperation in the area of defense and security.

ASEAN has welcomed the developments in the ADMM-Plus as it aims to promote defense and security cooperation among ASEAN and other key regional players. ASEAN recognizes its significant role within the evolving regional security architecture vis-a-vis the ARF.

While the ADMM-Plus provides a new venue for defense and security cooperation, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) shall remain as the primary forum in the Asia-Pacific region for discussing political-security issues and for promoting regional security. The Philippines also believes that the ADMM-Plus can complement the ARF process by directing the operational aspects of addressing shared security challenges, while the ARF charts the strategic path for regional security.

With this view, the Philippines recognizes the importance of forging closer cooperation and harmonizing these regional mechanisms to ensure coordination in addressing security issues in the Asia-Pacific region.

Thank you.