

Excellencies,

In the interest of utilizing preventive diplomacy measures as a means of averting the escalation of tensions into serious conflict, the Philippines would like to share our experience in the last five months in the West Philippine Sea, also known as the South China Sea.

The Philippines have suffered at least seven (7) aggressive intrusions since late February into where we maintain we have sovereign rights. These intrusions happened within eighty-five nautical miles from the nearest Philippine island of Palawan and nearly six hundred nautical miles from the nearest coast of China.

When the Philippines protested these intrusions, the response was a denial that no such intrusions occurred because of China's 9-dash line claim over the entire South China Sea.

The Philippines contends that the 9-dash claim of China has no validity under international law, specifically the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea or UNCLOS.

If Philippine sovereign rights can be denigrated by this baseless claim, many countries should begin to contemplate the potential threat to freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.

The preventive diplomacy solution as advocated by ARF may be achieved in either of two ways: one, through a process of segregating the disputed features from the non-disputed waters which will have to be vetted by the ASEAN maritime legal experts scheduled to meet in September in Manila; two, in the alternative, the Parties may wish to consider subjecting the 9-dash line to validation in accordance with UNCLOS.

The Philippines believes that a rules-based approach is the only legitimate way in addressing disputes in the South China Sea.

Thank you.