

THE ASEAN DEFENCE MINISTERS' MEETING-PLUS (ADMM-PLUS): CONFIGURATION AND COMPOSITION

Introduction

1. The Second ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (herein after referred to as "ADMM") held in Singapore on 14 November 2007 approved the "ADMM-Plus Concept Paper" which provides for the ADMM's engagement and interactions with ASEAN's friends and Dialogue Partners. The "ADMM-Plus Concept Paper" articulates the objectives for establishing an ADMM-Plus as well as the principles and broad modalities in establishing the ADMM-Plus. The Second ADMM further approved the establishment of a Working Group on Establishing the ADMM-Plus—reporting to the ASEAN Defence Senior Officials' Meeting (ADSOM)—to finalise the modalities of the ADMM-Plus.

2. Following the decision of the Second ADMM, the Third ADMM held in Pattaya, Kingdom of Thailand, on 26 February 2009 approved a follow-on paper titled "ADMM-Plus: Principles for Membership" which outlines a set of criteria that governs membership of the ADMM-Plus by countries outside ASEAN. The next step in operationalising the ADMM-Plus is to finalise the configuration and composition as well as the modalities and procedures of the ADMM-Plus. The ADMM-Plus will be established when there is consensus amongst ASEAN Member States, and at a pace comfortable to all.

3. Our ASEAN Leaders, at the 15th ASEAN Summit in Cha-am Hua Hin, welcomed the ASEAN Defence Ministers' initiative to establish a robust, effective, open, and inclusive regional security architecture through the establishment of the ADMM-Plus, which would contribute to the realisation of the ASEAN Political-Security Community by 2015. In connection to that, the ADMM also recognises the need for cooperation between ASEAN and countries in the larger Asia-Pacific to address the set of complex transnational security challenges that we now face. It further acknowledges that non-ASEAN Member States are keen to engage ASEAN in the area of defence and security as our security is increasingly intertwined. The ADMM's active engagement with the "Plus" countries will further enhance peace and stability in the region.

Definition of "Configuration" and "Composition"

4. The configuration of the ADMM-Plus refers to how the ADMM-Plus could be organised. In considering the configuration of the ADMM-Plus, ASEAN Member States can take reference from existing ASEAN templates, namely: (a) ASEAN+1 which involves ASEAN's external relations with the ten individual Dialogue Partner countries; (b) ASEAN+3 which brings together ASEAN and China, Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK); and (c) ASEAN+X where "X" refers to the countries that are able to fulfill the membership criteria. The ADMM+X configuration is in line with existing ASEAN templates and follows that of the East Asia Summit (EAS), which is essentially an ASEAN+X configuration, where "X" was similarly determined by three principles for admission into the EAS.

5. The composition of the ADMM-Plus refers to the ten ASEAN Member States as well as selected Dialogue Partners of ASEAN – if they meet the membership principles stipulated below – that would constitute and make up the ADMM-Plus. The composition of the ADMM-Plus can only be determined after the ADMM has agreed on the

configuration of the ADMM-Plus. Membership of the Dialogue Partners of ASEAN to the ADMM-Plus shall be guided by the following three principles that the Third ADMM has approved:

- a. The “Plus” country shall be a full-fledged Dialogue Partner of ASEAN, where Dialogue Partner status is in accordance with the ASEAN Charter.
- b. The “Plus” country shall have significant interactions and relations with ASEAN defence establishments.
- c. The “Plus” country is able to work with the ADMM to build capacity so as to enhance regional security in a substantive manner.

Configuration and Composition of the ADMM-Plus

6. ASEAN centrality must be protected and preserved in the ADMM-Plus process to ensure that ASEAN Member States remain the driving force. ASEAN should also have the prerogative to determine an ADMM-Plus configuration and composition that suit the needs of the ASEAN defence sectoral. In this regard, the ADMM-Plus should start right. The ADMM-Plus should be inaugurated with the right configuration and composition of countries, and in one step, from the outset, rather than in a series of small incremental steps.

7. The ADMM-Plus should also find a good balance between effectiveness and legitimacy. For effectiveness, the ADMM-Plus should be small enough to be nimble and responsive to security challenges facing the region. At the same time, to have legitimacy, it should be large enough to include the key stakeholders and to represent the interest of the region.

8. In consideration of the objectives and principles of the ADMM-Plus, the ADMM+1 and ADMM+3 configurations are found not suitable for the region. Multiple ADMM+1s could lead to a proliferation of meetings with separate agendas. It would also reduce the overall transparency of the ADMM-Plus, thereby limiting opportunities for open dialogue and mutual consultation between countries.

9. The ADMM+3 configuration, on the other hand, will only provide for the ADMM's engagement with a specific geographical region in the Asia-Pacific, i.e., Northeast Asia. Such a configuration omits the other major players who could also contribute positively to the peace and stability of the Southeast Asian region, particularly in addressing complex and transnational security challenges.

10. The ADMM+X configuration is the most appropriate for ASEAN and the region. Such a configuration would allow the ADMM to bring onboard the non-ASEAN countries that could best contribute to the peace and stability of the region. The broad-based configuration of the ADMM+X would also facilitate greater openness and transparency as well as a balanced representation of views, which is necessary for us to effectively address the range of complex and transnational security issues.

11. In subscribing to the ADMM+X configuration, membership to the ADMM-Plus will be governed by the three principles that the Third ADMM has approved in paragraph 5 above. In this regard, the following 8 countries best fulfill the membership criteria at this

juncture: Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States. Therefore, the ADMM-Plus should be inaugurated with a composition of the 10 ASEAN Member States and the inclusion of the aforementioned Dialogue Partners. The other Dialogue Partners of ASEAN could be considered for membership of the ADMM-Plus when they are able to fulfill the membership criteria.

Conclusion

12. The ADMM-Plus is an important component of the regional security architecture. It allows the ADMM to cooperate with the Dialogue Partners of ASEAN to build capacity and better prepare ASEAN to meet the non-traditional and transnational security challenges in the changing strategic environment.
