

Press Statement

YB Dato' Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein
Minister of Defence, Malaysia

IISS Shangri-La Dialogue 16th Asia Security Summit

Singapore, 4 June 2017

I am currently in Singapore attending the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue 16th Asia Security Summit, organized by the International Institute for Strategic Studies. During my working visit, I had the opportunity to hold several bilateral meetings with a few of my counterparts, namely HE Dr Ng Eng Hen (Minister for Defence, Singapore), HE General (Rtd) Ryamizard Ryacudu (Minister of Defence, Indonesia), Senator the Honourable Marise Payne (Minister for Defence, Australia), HE Sylvie Goulard (Minister for Armed Forces, France), HE General James Mattis (Secretary of Defence, United States of America) and HE Tomomi Inada (Minister of Defense, Japan). The discussions focused on matters related to bilateral and multilateral defence relations, especially our roles in facing the dynamics of regional security environments.

For the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue, I spoke during the 3rd Plenary titled "New Challenges For Crisis Management In The Asia-Pacific" alongside HE Harjit Singh Sajjan (Minister of National Defense, Canada) and General Zubair Mahmood Hayat (Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Pakistan Armed Forces). During my address, I highlighted the 5 challenges that I feel are most relevant at present – the proliferation of DAESH's Asia-Pacific ambitions, the escalating tension and volatility in the Korean Peninsula, inconsistencies in the quest for hegemony over the South China Sea, the democratisation of information flow, the vulnerable cyber security infrastructure and finally, the rise of authoritarian and populist nationalism sentiments as antithesis to globalization.

In addressing these challenges, I proposed 5 solutions – championing moderation both within and across borders, renewing commitments to regional and international cooperation, building trust and confidence with common humanitarian objectives, making security relevant in this digital age and portraying bold, firm, yet compassionate leadership. Most importantly, I reminded the delegates that when facing threats such as religious extremism; no one country can go at it alone. It is crucial now more than ever, that we put a united front, build a coalition and a movement of moderates with like-minded nations, to be the voice of reason to counter terrorism and extremism - a principle which have guided Malaysia's recent overtures in foreign policy.

The sidelines of the Shangri-La dialogue also hosted the ASEAN – US Defence Ministers' Informal Gathering where the Defence Ministers and representatives of all 10 countries welcomed General James Mattis, who recently succeeded Ashton Carter as the United States' Secretary of Defense under the leadership of President Donald Trump. The gathering provided a platform for discussions on the issues faced by the region, ranging from the threat of the Islamic State or DAESH, the development in the South China Sea and escalating tensions in the Korean Peninsula.

I reiterated to Secretary Mattis the commitment made by the 10 ASEAN Defence Ministers who signed a joint statement conveying our strong condemnation against DAESH and similar organizations under Malaysia's chairmanship in Langkawi on 16 March 2016. Secretary Mattis expressed his agreement on how important it is for ASEAN nations to collectively do more in addressing these mutual challenges, to ensure peace and security and gave assurances that the US will provide unwavering support to the region. The gathering also highlighted the upcoming launching of the trilateral maritime patrol, a partnership between Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines that will provide greater security at the Sulu and Sulawesi Sea areas via joint patrols.

On the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue, the Defence Ministers of Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and the United Kingdom also came together for the Five Powers Defence Arrangement Defence Ministers' Meeting (FDMM) where we reaffirmed our respective commitments to the FPDA and its importance in enhancing regional cooperation and security. All Ministers were also in unison that terrorism poses a clear and present threat to this region and beyond.

In keeping with the FPDA's remit, we agreed to share intelligence to deal with terrorist threats against Malaysia and Singapore, and further measures to strengthen counter-terrorism activities. We also welcome initiatives to enhance the transparency of the FPDA, and expressed support to enhance the observer programme, where non-FPDA countries in the region could observe FPDA exercises. With the 50th anniversary of the FPDA around the corner, all five ministers will continue to work together to ensure that the FPDA continues to remain relevant in the region's security architecture.

- end -