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Opening Remarks by PS(D) at the 3rd and Final ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Military Medicine on 10 Oct 2013

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Delegates of the 3rd ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group & on Military Medicine (EWG-MM), First of all, welcome to Singapore. It gives me great pleasure to deliver the opening address for the 3rd ADMM-Plus EWG-MM meeting. This is a significant event for both Singapore and Japan, who are the co-chairs of the EWG-MM. It marks the successful completion of the three-year EWG-MM workplan that was approved by ADSOM-Plus in April 2011. I would like to thank the co-chairs, Dr Toyonori Omori and RADM (Dr) Kang Wee Lee, as well as all the delegates who have worked tirelessly towards achieving the objectives that this EWG set out three years ago.

Before I touch on the good progress of the EWG-MM, allow me to take you back to 2010, when the inaugural ADMM-Plus meeting was held in Hanoi. The first ADMM-Plus was a major milestone, not just for the defence sectoral, but for ASEAN as a whole. The ADMM-Plus brought together for the first time, the Defence Ministers of ten ASEAN and eight Plus countries. It provided a valuable platform for Defence Ministers to come together to discuss security issues that are of direct concern to the region. In late Aug this year, the Defence Ministers met for the 2nd ADMM-Plus in Brunei. They again emphasised the relevance and importance of the ADMM-Plus as a key component of the regional security architecture.

Beyond strategic dialogue, there was also clear consensus amongst the Defence Ministers that the ADMM-Plus is an action-oriented platform. It brings to the table a value proposition in the area of practical cooperation that other forums find hard to replicate. The ADMM-Plus Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief and Military Medicine (HADR/MM) Exercise which Brunei hosted in June this year, 2013, is an oft-cited

example of practical cooperation conducted under the ADMMPlus framework. The Exercise saw the involvement of some 3,200 personnel, 15 helicopters, six naval ships and six search and rescue teams from all 18 ADMM-Plus nations. We also saw how medical teams from various countries, China, the US and Vietnam, worked together to treat casualties, and how search and rescue teams from Brunei, China and the Philippines were deployed to rescue displaced villagers. Such activities are not only effective in building trust but also contribute towards stable military-to-military relations.

Singapore and Japan, as co-chairs of the EWG-MM, was part of the Exercise Steering Committee and had worked very closely with Brunei and the co-chairs of the EWG-HADR - Vietnam and China - to plan and execute the Exercise. I would like to commend the EWG-MM on the significant contributions that it has made to the success of the ADMM-Plus HADR/MM Exercise. Having identified medical support in HADR operations as its focus, the EWG-MM's workplan progressively strengthened cooperation, inter-operability and coordination among the military medical services of the 18 ADMM-Plus countries in HADR operations.

This in turn laid a strong foundation and led to the successful collaboration between the EWG-MM and EWG-HADR in the joint military exercise.

Apart from its contributions to the Exercise, the EWG-MM has much to be proud of. The establishment of the EWG-MM marks the first time that practical cooperation in military medicine is undertaken within the regional security framework. The EWG-MM also conducted a workshop in Singapore in 2011 to help identify common challenges, and share experiences and perspectives in military medical support operations. We also conducted a scenario-based Table-Top Exercise (TTX) on medical support for HADR operations in Tokyo. In Mar 2013, Australia conducted a 3-day HADR medical needs assessment course to provide joint training in specific skills to raise the level of key medical competencies in HADR.

As we prepare for the new cycle of EWGs from 2014 to 2016, I am excited with the boundless opportunities that await us. The first cycle of the EWG-MM had focused on military medicine within the context of HADR, which allowed us to witness the complementarity between military medicine and HADR. I am confident that the EWG-MM would explore new areas of mutual interest as well as synergies across the other EWGs.

Singapore is honoured to co-chair the EWG-MM with Japan and we have found the opportunity to work with the militaries of the ASEAN and Plus countries very valuable. I would like to conclude by expressing Singapore's support for Thailand and Russia's upcoming co-chairmanship of the EWG-MM. The ADMM Plus and the EWGs are

important platforms that help sustain our efforts in maintaining peace and stability in our region. I am heartened by the strong turn-out at today's meeting. And I will encourage the ADMM-Plus militaries to continue this strong cooperative ethos, commitment and contribution in the next cycle of the EWGs.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish all the delegates present a successful and meaningful meeting, and I hope you have a pleasant stay in Singapore. I am quite sure that there will be a lot of valuable insights that will be shared later this morning. Thank you very much.

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