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## **Opening Remarks by Mr Chan Yeng Kit, Permanent Secretary (Defence), at the 4th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus Experts' Working Group on Counter-Terrorism**

13 Oct 2014

Co-Chairs of the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Counter-Terrorism (EWG-CT), COL Richard Campbell and COL Simon Lim, Delegates to the 4th EWG-CT meeting, Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to Singapore and good morning to all of you.

Singapore is pleased to co-chair the EWG-CT with Australia and to host our first meeting as the new co-chairs of this EWG. First, I wish to commend Indonesia and the US for their excellent work as previous co-chairs of the EWG-CT. I would also like to congratulate the US and Indonesia for the success of the ADMM-Plus CT Exercise hosted by Indonesia in September last year. With both countries having set high standards for forging practical cooperation, Singapore and Australia aim to sustain this momentum with our future activities.

Practical cooperation remains a key focus of our co-chairmanship of the EWG-CT. It is one of two key thrusts for the ADMM-Plus - the other being strategic dialogue. The ADMM-Plus Ministers gave strong endorsement to the work undertaken by the EWGs when they met in Brunei last year. Practical cooperation builds trust and confidence amongst our militaries and lays the foundation for the ADMM-Plus to make further progress in addressing security challenges of common concern. The EWGs have done very good work so far. Over the past three years, the EWGs have not only provided a valuable platform for expert-level exchanges, but also for practical activities. The EWGs have conducted three table top exercises and three field training exercises. This includes

the highly successful ADMM-Plus HADR/Military Medicine (MM) Exercise hosted by Brunei in June of last year. The EWGs will continue to form an important pillar of the ADMM-Plus and lead the way in practical cooperation. In this regard, I am encouraged that the ADSOM-Plus this year adopted six new workplans, each one looking to build upon the good work the previous co-chairs have achieved.

Global and regional terrorism, including the threat posed by the so-called "Islamic State in Iraq and Syria", will galvanise the work of the EWG-CT. Militaries will have to be alert and ready to respond to this growing threat. In the EWG-CT, ADMM-Plus militaries and defence establishments have a platform to exchange views and share best practices and lessons learnt, which will enhance our region's capacity to respond to emerging terrorist threats. Beyond this, it is important that the EWG translates such constructive exchanges into practical action.

Hence, a key deliverable for EWG-CT, we are working closely with the EWG on Maritime Security (MS) to jointly organise the ADMM-Plus CT/MS - Counter-Terrorism and Maritime Security - Exercise. South East Asia is an important maritime region, where key Sea Lines of Communication converge. The Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS), and the South China Sea (SCS) account for half of the world's shipping by tonnage, as well as half of the world's oil tanker traffic. Armed robbery and piracy incidents in these two areas remain a persistent issue. These cannot be underestimated. If we are vulnerable to such incidents at sea, terrorists will eventually exploit these weaknesses. The damage that could be dealt by terrorists at sea would come at great cost to the region.

As the scale and complexity of such threats grow, so must our efforts to counter these threats. The EWG-CT and EWG-MS have thus received strong endorsement from ADMM-Plus Senior Officials to plan and conduct an ADMM-Plus CT/MS exercise in 2016. The combined efforts of the two EWGs will also reflect the desire for the ADMM-Plus to tackle more complex security challenges in the coming years.

The EWG-CT's work for the next three years formally begins today, although I know that a lot of work has gone on before today. The agenda for the plenary and various breakout sessions will set the tone and direction for CT cooperation over the next few years. The EWG-CT has set ambitious but meaningful targets. I would like to encourage all EWG-CT members to give the co-chairs, COL Richard Campbell, Deputy Special Operations Commander from the Australian Defence Force, and COL Simon Lim, Commander Special Operations Task Force, Singapore Armed Forces, your fullest support.

To conclude, I wish all delegates a successful and meaningful meeting ahead, with plenty

of sharing and plenty of learning. Thank you very much.

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