



# SPEECH

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## **Speech by Minister of State for Defence Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman, at 4th International Maritime Security Conference (IMSC)**

20 May 2015

His Excellency Mr Ong Keng Yong, Executive Deputy Chairman RSIS,  
Permanent Secretaries  
Chief of Defence Force  
Navy Chiefs and Coast Guard Directors-General,  
Heads of Delegation,  
Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Good Morning.

### **Introduction and Welcome**

It is a great pleasure for me to be here at the 4th International Maritime Security Conference, or IMSC for short. Since the inaugural conference in 2009, IMSC has consistently garnered the attention of the maritime community, featuring prominent speakers and a distinguished audience. This event has become a key platform to gather, exchange ideas and address emerging issues. I would like to first welcome all the participants from various countries gathered here in Singapore for IMDEX Asia 2015, as well as representatives from industry and academia. I would like to especially acknowledge the presence of about 30 chiefs and vice-chiefs of the navy and coast-guard, as well as delegations from more than 50 navies, coast guards and the air forces.

Your presence at this conference contributes to a valuable gathering of minds and expertise, and demonstrates our collective commitment toward securing our maritime commons. Indeed, the theme for this conference is

"Safe and Secure Seas - Strengthening Maritime Cooperation".

### **Importance of Maritime Trade and Security**

Our collective commitment to safe and secure seas is founded upon the importance of maritime trade. In 2013, a total of 9.6 billion tonnes of seaborne trade was registered, accounting for more than 90 percent of global trade. Of this, Asia constituted the main source of maritime trade, accounting for 41 percent of global exports and 58 percent of global imports. For ASEAN nations, many of which sit at the confluence of major maritime trade routes, seaborne trade constitutes the majority of all trade. As we work towards building an ASEAN Economic Community in 2015, we expect increased trade flows and greater integration between ASEAN economies. This will make securing maritime trade even more important.

Apart from trade, the maritime industry is a strong economic pillar for many Asian nations, providing a large number of jobs and sustaining many other industries. Take Singapore as an example. The maritime industry constitutes about 7 percent of our GDP and sustains 170,000 jobs. The maritime industry also provides the important connectivity necessary for our manufacturing and trading sectors to flourish. Many Asian countries are similarly dependent on maritime activities for their livelihood.

### **Challenges in the Maritime Domain**

The safety and security of our seas are thus a priority for all of us. This is particularly so in light of the increasing complexity of regional and global maritime security challenges. Given their transnational nature, no one state can deal with these challenges on its own.

A number of challenges in the Asia-Pacific are of special concern. First, tensions over maritime disputes in the region have risen, as more states seek to assert their maritime rights. This takes place at a time when the presence of maritime forces in the region is growing, as regional navies modernise. There is a risk that miscalculations on the ground can escalate, and if not managed well, potentially lead to the destabilisation of the regional maritime environment.

Second, maritime terrorism, piracy and sea robberies continue to pose threats to regional security. The latest manifestation of extremist terror is the ISIS, which has managed to propagate its ideology all over the world, including through skilful use of the internet and social media. It has drawn more than 20,000 fighters to Iraq and Syria so far, and we have also seen an increase in "lone-wolf" attacks by individuals radicalised by its ideology - the Sydney hostage crisis in December last year is one such example. With an estimated 300 Southeast Asian radicals now fighting in Iraq and Syria, a major concern is, of course, what would happen when these fighters

return, more radicalised and combat-hardened. Southeast Asia is particularly susceptible to maritime terrorism, given its vast archipelagic waters. Already, we have groups like Al-Qaeda which recently renewed calls for attacks on tankers in the Malacca Strait as well as US warships based in Singapore, posing threats to regional maritime security.

In recent years, piracy and sea robberies have also increased in regional waters. Although the majority of these incidents are petty in nature and seldom involve the use of violence, they remain a cause for concern for mariners and security agencies. As regional economies grow more interconnected, such threats to maritime trade could negatively impact the economic development of the region.

Third, disasters at sea, including the tragic fates of flights MH370 and QZ8501 have shown the need for coordinated multinational efforts in mounting quick and effective responses. We can and should continue to do more to strengthen cooperation to deal with such disasters.

### **Building Trust and Practical Cooperation**

As a maritime community, I see great value in cooperation, where strengthened relationships can build deeper trust and enhance reciprocity.

In modern civic society, there is strong evidence for relationships between individuals creating networks of social structures that confer social capital to individuals within the network. Such social capital acts as important resource that can be tapped on in times of crisis. It bears to reason that these forms of social capital are equally beneficial on the seas, as a form of 'maritime capital' if you may. If we, as maritime nations, develop these strong relationships with each other, we too can form a strong network of trust and reciprocity that will shape

our interactions in our maritime commons, and guide concerted efforts to contend with maritime challenges of today. We can enhance our maritime capital over time and tap on this resource when called upon in times of need.

In fact, we have already come some way in fostering cooperative engagements between states, as we develop regional and global initiatives in the interest of maritime security.

One key means of building trust and cooperation is via dialogue, of which the IMSC is a prime example. In two weeks, Singapore will also host the Shangri-La Dialogue, a key forum held annually to discuss defence and security concerns in the region and beyond. This and other platforms such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, East Asian Summit, ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and the ADMM-Plus allow defence leaders to exchange views, build trust and explore new initiatives for collaboration.

Apart from dialogue, navies build mutual trust through practical cooperation, working on common challenges for mutual benefit. A good example of operational cooperation is found at the Information Fusion Centre or IFC situated at the Changi Command and Control Centre (CC2C). The IFC conducts capacity-building activities such as international maritime information-sharing exercises and workshops such as the annual Regional Maritime Security Practitioner Course.

The IFC has also collaborated with many navies and coast guards to tackle threats to regional maritime security. Let me quote an example. On 28 August last year, a tanker was hijacked in the South China Sea. The tanker's master reported the incident to the Thai authorities who passed on the information to IFC and the ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre, which is also based in Singapore. The IFC quickly shared this information with its regional partners. Subsequently, within the same day, the IFC received a tip-off from a shipper that a vessel was seeking to sell marine gasoil on the black market. Again this information was swiftly transmitted by the IFC to its partners, and armed with this information, the Malaysian authorities managed to localise and detain the vessel in the Johor anchorage, all within a span of 16 hours! This incident displayed clearly the importance and value of regional cooperation, and we should continue to leverage on initiatives like IFC and ReCAAP to provide effective actions against regional maritime security threats.

Building on the IFC's successful model, Singapore also established the Changi Regional HADR Coordination Centre or RHCC in Sep 2014, to enhance military-to-military coordination in disaster response. The RHCC focuses on supporting a disaster affected state's military in coordinating the assistance provided by foreign militaries. To date, seven countries have already accredited liaison officers to the RHCC, while two others have established working links. In the recent Nepal earthquake, the Changi RHCC was activated and worked closely with the Nepalese authorities and military to coordinate the relief efforts. For example, a Royal Brunei Armed Force medical team was flown to Nepal on a Republic of Singapore Air Force C-130, and partnered the Singapore Armed Forces medical team to provide primary health care to the people of Gorkana village near Kathmandu. This was facilitated by the Brunei liaison officer in the IFC who is also accredited to RHCC, a strong testament to the tight linkages between RHCC and its partnering militaries.

One more way to strengthen our cooperation is by the conduct of maritime exercises, both ashore and at sea. In conjunction with IMDEX Asia this year, the RSN is hosting the Maritime Information Sharing Exercise (MARISX) and the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) Multilateral Sea Exercise (WMSX). Ashore, navies will seek to strengthen information-sharing linkages; while at sea, eight navies will exercise maritime security scenarios to strengthen interoperability amongst regional navies and maritime enforcement agencies. In particular, the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES), endorsed at the 14th WPNS in Qingdao last year,

will be used for the first time in this series of exercises.

Other than MARISX and WMSX, dozens of multilateral maritime exercises are conducted regularly in this region. These include major exercises like the Rim of the Pacific Exercise or RIMPAC, and Five Power Defence Arrangement exercises such as Bersama Shield and Bersama Lima. These multilateral exercises enhance mutual understanding and confidence, strengthen operational coordination and facilitate the establishment of common operating procedures. This ensures that when called upon, our navies are able to respond swiftly and effectively.

Looking ahead, navies will continue to face challenges, but such challenges are also opportunities. Let me provide an example. In the next few years, we will see more navies in the region operating more submarines, including in the rather congested and shallow South China Sea. While this raises safety issues, there are also opportunities for cooperation in submarine operational safety. The Republic of Singapore Navy and the United States Navy are co-hosting the Asia Pacific Submarine Conference over the next few days, where we will see submarine practitioners coming together to discuss submarine rescue and operational safety.

### **IMSC as a valued platform**

In the midst of these developing trends and challenges, let us use the IMSC as a platform for dialogue to explore these issues. Let us ask ourselves, how can we tap on the expertise and experience in our midst today? I would like to share some possibilities for you to consider.

First, let us use this opportunity to strengthen our collective commitment and cooperation to regional peace and security. As we strive towards safe and secure seas for all, we can ask ourselves what are the challenges to security and stability in the region? How can we build on our trust and understanding and tackle these challenges together? Are there norms of behaviour we can seek to establish to provide a framework for predictable actions to enhance mutual understanding?

Second, we have the opportunity to tap on the diverse and extensive expertise of stakeholders and prominent members of the international maritime community present today. We can leverage on this shared wisdom and ask ourselves how we can build stronger linkages in cooperation through multilateral cooperation? Are there ways to combat the maritime threats in this region together

Today, we have two panels that will discuss 'Challenges and Cooperation in Maritime Security', as well as 'Maritime Futures and Challenges'. I look forward to active panel discussions.

Finally, let us use this opportunity to reinforce our institutional and personal networks and friendships. I hope

that the networks and relationships built up over the course of this conference will help contribute in small ways toward greater maritime cooperation among regional navies, coast guards and related agencies.

### **Conclusion**

It is now my pleasure to declare the 4th IMSC open. I wish all participants a fruitful discussion. Thank you.

### **News Release:**

- MINDEF Officials Officiate at 4th IMSC and 2nd INEC (MINDEF\_20150520002.pdf)

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