



U.S. PARTICIPATION IN THE ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM

July 27-28, 2006

The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the principal forum for consideration of security issues in the Asia-Pacific region, will meet for its 13th session in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia July 27-28, 2006. The United States is actively engaged in ARF, which was created in 1994, under the auspices of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).



ARF LEADERSHIP

The ASEAN chair serves concurrently as the ARF chair. The ARF chair convenes and presides over the annual Foreign Ministers' Meeting which provides policy direction to the ARF, and over the annual Senior Officials' Meeting, which is the primary decision-making body for the ARF. Malaysia is the current chair through this meeting, to be followed by the Philippines next year.

CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES

The ARF also engages in confidence-building, which is at the heart of its mission to promote transparency and stability. Most confidence-building measures involve seminars and workshops on specific topics of concern. ARF participants are holding these sessions more frequently and on an expanding range of topics.

Examples include last year's U.S.-Thai seminar on Missile Defense and a seminar on Nonproliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction that the United States co-chaired with China and Singapore.

NEW AVENUES

ARF participants are also looking to cooperate more tangibly in areas of non-traditional security such as counterterrorism, maritime security, and disaster response. In addition, participants are beginning to explore avenues of preventive

diplomacy in order to avoid conflict and avert problems before they develop.

ARF'S CONTRIBUTIONS

The ARF has proven to be an effective forum for dialogue on a wide range of issues and challenges. The United States believes the ARF, along with complementary institutions, can make an increasingly valuable contribution to meeting security challenges in the Asia-Pacific region.

ARF CURRENTLY HAS 25 PARTICIPANTS:

Australia, Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Canada, China, East Timor, the European Union, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, North Korea, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, the United States, and Vietnam.

Bangladesh will join at the 13th ARF session.