

INTERVENTIONS

H.E. PRAK Sokhonn, Deputy Prime Minister
Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
Roundtables of the Ministerial Forum for Cooperation
in the Indo-Pacific

22 February 2022, 10:15-11:45, Paris, France

First Round Table: Security and Defense Issues

Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

1. We are living in the most uncertain time since the end of the Cold War as the international order has undergone fundamental transformations as the result of a balance of power shift, a sharpened strategic rivalry between major powers, and the decline of multilateralism. Even worse, some security arrangements have been formed against one another, bearing resemblance of the Cold War era. These strategic and security recalibrations have further complicated existing traditional security challenges.
2. Against this backdrop, ASEAN has tried to maintain a strategic balance through the promotion of its internal unity and the maintaining of its centrality in the evolving regional security architecture, in particular in the Indo-Pacific. It is quite obvious that the over-politicisation and over-securitisation of the Indo-Pacific have led to the proliferation of different exclusive security-oriented regional architecture. ASEAN wishes to see the Southeast Asia region as a zone of peace and stability through further strengthening ASEAN Centrality and Unity. We express our

concern that the establishment of AUKUS could be the starting point that triggers regional arms race, fuels confrontation and increases regional tensions.

3. ASEAN has embraced all these initiatives as long as they contribute to regional peace, stability and prosperity through cooperation not confrontation. We have come up with our own ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, with the clear intention to provide a supportive platform to allow the co-existence for these complementary versions of the Indo-Pacific. Our focus is on practical areas of cooperation and on issues that bind us rather than issues to divide us. ASEAN does not want to have to choose which major powers to side with.
4. The EU and European partners, including France, need to present an alternative option to help Southeast Asian countries expand their strategic autonomy. Moreover, they should focus on practical areas of cooperation, based on the principles of mutual respect, mutual understanding, mutual trust, and mutual interest.
5. In this regard, ASEAN and the EU, including France, are natural partners to promote an open, inclusive, rules-based Indo-Pacific. Our partnership will shape the future of the Indo-Pacific in which peace, prosperity and progress can be ensured. To that effect, ASEAN is aiming to create a concept paper to operationalize the AOIP, and we seek your support to carry out practical cooperation under this framework.
