

Final Report

The Network of East Asian Think-Tanks (NEAT) Working Group: Overall Architecture of Community Building in East Asia – Regional Architectures for Non-Traditional Security and Environmental Cooperation in East Asia June 13-14, 2007, Tokyo, Japan

Introduction

The NEAT Working Group (WG) on Overall Architecture of Community Building in East Asia met on June 13 and 14, 2007 in Tokyo, Japan, with 21 participants from the 13 NEAT member countries.

In the previous meeting of this WG in April 2006, discussions focused on non-traditional security issues (with particular emphasis on transnational crimes), environmental degradation, and pandemic threats. Recognizing that these are cross-border issues that pose common regional challenges and require the promotion of regional cooperation, the WG called for the strengthening of regional cooperative mechanisms based on the existing framework of ASEAN+3 (APT).

Based on this prior consensus, the WG meeting in 2007 provided the venue for intensive and productive discussions on the above challenges with the idea of promoting the ASEAN Secretariat as the hub of policy making and regional cooperation. The WG envisions the effective utilization of the APT framework to promote functional cooperation among member countries, and the leading role of the ASEAN Secretariat in initiating, coordinating and realizing regional cooperation.

Architecture to Promote Cooperation on Non-Traditional Security Issues (with emphasis on Transnational Crimes)

1 The WG discussed five issues: (a) ASEAN efforts to combat transnational crimes since the declaration of ASEAN Plan of Action to Combat Transnational Crime in 1999; (2) Trafficking in persons (TIP); (3) Cyber security cooperation; (4) Illicit drugs; and (5) Counter-terrorism cooperation. The following proposals were made:

1-1 The WG respects the prioritization of the four agendas set by the ASEAN Secretariat.

These are: counter-terrorism, TIP, illicit drugs, and money-laundering. Prioritizing these agendas does not preclude the promotion of cooperation on other types of transnational crimes.

1-2 The WG underscores the importance of legal harmonization among member countries in order to standardize counter-measures against transnational crimes. Existing differences among APT countries concerning the definition of crimes—for example, “trafficking,” “smuggling,” and “terrorism”—should be resolved to facilitate effective multilateral cooperation.

1-3 The WG urges APT leaders to initiate specific programs in line with the ASEAN Plan of Action and the 2002 Kuala Lumpur Declaration (on the Work Program to Implement the ASEAN Plan of Action to Combat Transnational Crime). There are already a number of existing agreements and declarations regarding transnational crimes. What is needed is to translate words into action. The WG urges the implementation of regional cooperation programs for (a) financial assistance; (b) capacity building; (c) technical assistance; (d) legal assistance; (5) the sharing of best practices; and (6) border-management.

1-4 In developing the regional cooperation programs above, the WG expects the ASEAN Secretariat to play the leading role; for this reason, the WG proposes that the capabilities of the Secretariat be enhanced, especially in terms of human capacity and financial resources.

1-5 The WG recognizes that collaboration with local communities is crucial to efforts at combating transnational crimes. In particular, the WG advocates the establishment of networks that include concerned NGOs and local community organizations for the purpose of providing support for the victims of transnational crimes. As a first step, the WG calls for the establishment of an Anti-TIP Task Force involving both Track-1 and Track-2 people to facilitate networking with local communities in the region and to increase public awareness of these crimes.

1-6 The WG encourages East Asian academics and public intellectuals to initiate research and other collaborative activities concerning non-traditional security issues in the region and to disseminate their findings and policy recommendations to the public.

Architecture to Promote Environmental Protection

2 The WG discussed five issues: (a) the need for developing concrete projects to tackle such issues as acid rain, global warming, air pollution, marine (river) contamination, and

deforestation; (b) haze; (c) emission of greenhouse gas and the problem of climate change; (d) environmental degradation in the Greater Mekong Sub-region; and (e) pollution and forest protection in Borneo/Kalimantan. The following proposals were made:

2-1 The APT should establish mechanisms for regional environmental cooperation by developing existing ASEAN frameworks such as AMME/AMME+3, ASOEN, AMAF, ASOF, ASOEN-HTTF. The ASEAN Secretariat, which has two specialized units for environmental cooperation, should also be supported.

2-2 The WG affirms the necessity of forging common principles of environmental protection in the region in order to facilitate collective action and to develop specific projects for cooperation. These common principles should include, for instance, the prioritization of regional cooperation to address trans-boundary issues; ASEAN as hub of regional cooperation; and the assumption by the APT countries of collective responsibility for environmental protection.

2-3 The WG acknowledges that environmental issues are diverse and that the concerns of each country may differ. Nevertheless, it is necessary to develop a regional program for sharing best practices among APT countries.

2-4 In tackling the problems of deforestation, forest preservation, and illegal logging, efforts should be made to involve local community people in the cooperation schemes.

2-5 Public awareness and education programs concerning environmental protection should be developed.

2-6 Although global warming is a “global” problem, regional measures must be initiated to address this problem. The WG recommends the establishment of an APT Global Warming Task Force which will develop “Asian Ways” for identifying, monitoring, and securitizing the threat of global warming in the region.

Architecture to Promote Cooperation against Pandemic Threats

3 The WG discussed the pandemic threat posed by such diseases as SARS, AIDS, and avian influenza (AI). This session focused mainly on the recent outbreaks of avian influenza, and on ways of containing and managing the common regional threat. The following proposals were made:

3-1 AI is a trans-boundary threat that requires regional mechanisms for disease surveillance and control.

3-2 ASEAN has already formulated a Work Plan for the Control and Eradication of HPAI (Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza) in order to combat AI. There is no consensus, however, on policy and implementation. The WG stresses the need for enhancing the monitoring capabilities of APT countries. The WG expects the ASEAN Secretariat to play a leading role and urges the Plus Three Countries to support the strengthening of the capability of the ASEAN Secretariat via the existing channel of APTEIDP (APT Emerging Infectious Disease Programs).

3-3 The WG highlights the significance of domestic policy initiatives to be undertaken by the APT governments. These initiatives include the following:

3-3-1 Establish an AI Information Gathering Center which integrates data from related agencies both at the national and local levels. The Center will be responsible for designing domestic surveillance and damage control systems.

3-3-2 Measures to reinforce the border control of infected birds/chickens should be adopted by each country to prevent smuggling and prohibit trade of infected chickens. This is intended to improve the transparency of regional anti-AI policies and build mutual trust among APT countries.

3-3-3 Local communities should be actively involved in the fight against AI. The WG urges that a viable compensation program for local farmers whose income bases are threatened by AI be implemented. Public awareness and education programs should also target local communities that are likely to be affected by the AI.

3-4 In order to promote APT cooperation, the WG proposes the institutionalization of the APT Center for Pandemics which includes the AI Task Force. The Task Force—which consists of policy-makers, AI experts, civil society/local community organizations—is expected to monitor and identify problems in the early-detection, surveillance and crisis-management systems. A regional framework for cooperation is urgently needed to combat the threat of AI.

Conclusion

The Working Group on Overall Architecture of Community Building in East Asia in 2007

argues that transnational crimes, environmental degradation and pandemics are all cross-border threats that cannot be countered at the individual state level. It is therefore imperative that regional counter-measures be adopted and multilateral cooperation frameworks be established to address these problems. Such cooperation is not only important in itself, but is also crucial to nurturing trust and promoting community building in East Asia.

The APT governments should move beyond information exchange and dialogue to formulating concrete policies and implementing specific programs of action to address these cross-border challenges.

Regional cooperation should be undertaken within the framework of ASEAN Plus Three especially for the purposes of providing financial support, capacity-building assistance, and sharing of best practices. The WG urges the ASEAN Secretariat to serve as the hub of regional cooperation and play a leading role in designing and coordinating specific programs of action. APT should provide support for enhancing the capability of ASEAN Secretariat to address the regional challenges.