



PRESS RELEASE

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Two more priority areas added to the work of ASEAN Political and Security Council

ASEAN Foreign Ministers today agreed to add two more priority areas in the work of the organization's Political and Security Council, a press conference was told.

"Actions relating to political and security issues under the work plan of ASEAN's initiative for reducing the region's development gaps and the implementation of the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea were added to the priority areas of works of the ASEAN Political and Security Council (APSC)," said Mr. Vitavas Srivihok, Director-General of Thailand's ASEAN Affairs Department.

Speaking on the outcome of today's second meeting of the APSC, Mr. Srivihok said the meeting discussed the progress made on the implementation of the priority areas and agreed to put more effort into expediting implementation of the priorities.

"It is important that results and recommendations of the APSC be disseminated to all agencies concerned in each individual Member State", said Mr. Srivihok.

At their first meeting in April, the APSC identified 11 political and security issues as their priority areas of cooperation: (1) the endorsement of the Terms of Reference of the ASEAN Human Rights Body; (2) the establishment of ASEAN's new dispute settlement mechanisms; (3) the setting up of guidelines for accession to the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia; (4) the enhancement of ASEAN cooperation regarding disaster management; (5) the enhancement of ASEAN cooperation on the fight against human trafficking and people smuggling, including the drafting of ASEAN conventions in areas of trafficking in persons and migrant workers; (6) the setting up of an ASEAN Fisheries Forum; (7) the enhancement of cooperation with civil society organizations in the fight against non-traditional security problems; (8) the finalization of an ARF vision statement; (9) the strengthening of the role of ASEAN in peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance; (10) the enhancement of cooperation on the SEANWFZ Treaty and (11) the drafting of the APSC's rules of procedures.

The APSC is a new body set up when the ASEAN Charter came into effect, with the ASEAN Foreign Ministers serving as members of the Council. The APSC is assigned the task of developing ASEAN political and security cooperation towards the goal of an ASEAN Community by 2015 as stipulated in the ASEAN Political and Security Community Blueprint adopted last March at the 14th ASEAN Summit.

Mr. Srivihok added that today's meeting agreed to explore ASEAN's joint procurement of medicines as part of the measures to deal with pandemic diseases in the region and enable people to have access to affordable medicines. Also, the meeting agreed that efforts should be made to promote inter-faith dialogue and activities among ASEAN countries.

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