

33rd ASIA-PACIFIC ROUNDTABLE
***“A Great Unwinding? Rules-Based Regional Security Order to 2020
and Beyond”***

**Welcoming Remarks by Tan Sri Rastam Mohd Isa,
Chairman and Chief Executive
Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia**

**Hilton Kuala Lumpur
24 June 2019**

Dr. Aileen Baviera
Chairman of ASEAN-ISIS

ASEAN-ISIS Heads

Excellencies, distinguished guests and participants

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you once again, to the Asia-Pacific Roundtable (APR). As many of you are aware, this Roundtable is organised by ISIS Malaysia in cooperation with the ASEAN-ISIS Network, made up of Southeast Asia’s leading think tanks. I would like to especially welcome Dr. Aileen Baviera, President of the Asia Pacific Pathways to Progress Foundation, who is the current Chairman of ASEAN-ISIS.

2. This is the 33rd edition of the APR. We have held it annually without fail for the last three decades. The APR has developed its own niche and reputation and is recognised worldwide as one of the most important annual Track Two conferences of its kind in this region.

3. We started off with a humble beginning. The First APR was held in a truly roundtable format at the ISIS Malaysia premises in 1987. The Fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad lent his support to the APR right from the beginning. Tomorrow, Tun Dr. Mahathir will address this conference as the Seventh Prime Minister of Malaysia.
4. The APR has brought together great minds from around the world to engage in robust and constructive discussion on a wide range of issues. Initially these issues focussed on security, stability, sustainability and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region. Now we endeavour to widen the discussion to cover a broad range of topics of great interest to governments and the public at large. This is clearly reflected in this 33rd APR's agenda.

Ladies and gentlemen,

5. One of the challenges in developing a theme for the APR is that it should not only reflect the realities of the day, but also anticipate the challenges of the future. This year, the APR takes on the theme of the regional and global order, entitled "*A Great Unwinding? Rules-Based Regional Security Order to 2020 and Beyond*". It takes into account the constant evolution of the regional security, political, economic and socio-cultural architectures – especially in the Asia-Pacific region.

6. Lately, there has been intense discussion about the Indo-Pacific: be it as a concept or strategy or outlook. Hence, we thought it would be pertinent for this conference to begin this afternoon by discussing the Asia-Pacific vs Indo-Pacific. There are some very interesting developments in this regard: The US issued an Indo-Pacific Strategic Report on 1st June 2019, curiously through the Department of Defence. Yesterday, the ASEAN Leaders adopted the “ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific” at the 34th ASEAN Summit in Bangkok.
7. Let me just mention here that while discussion on the Indo-Pacific is intensifying, there is certainly no appetite on our part to rush into calling this conference the IPR (Indo-Pacific Roundtable).
8. In other contexts, we are witnessing new developments impacting nuclear arms control and disarmament, the process of peace negotiations in the Korean Peninsula, China’s continuing growth and expanding influence, as well as political contestations in Southeast Asia. These ought to be addressed by this Roundtable and appropriate sessions have been allocated for them.

9. Besides these, there are new and unprecedented challenges that contribute to the unwinding of global stability, such as technological rivalries that impact broader security architectures and state sponsored influence operations in this new digital age. We will talk about these too during this Roundtable.

10. Additionally, this Roundtable will also seek to explore the state and evolution of the Asia-Europe partnership at a time when both regions are undergoing their own challenges and facing various pressures. We have to elicit frank discussion on the humanitarian crisis along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. And we also will convene a session on the challenges, opportunities and priorities for ASEAN as it draws ever closer to the goals spelled out in its Vision 2025. For this we have Dr. Marty Natalegawa, former Foreign Minister of Indonesia to speak on 26 June.

Ladies and gentlemen,

11. The continued success of the APR over the last three decades is greatly attributed to the support given by successive Malaysian Prime Ministers and the government, as well as the region's leaders. I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Honourable Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, who has agreed to deliver the keynote address of this conference tomorrow. He has been a strong supporter of the APR since its inception in 1987 and throughout his earlier tenure as Prime Minister.

12. Participants would recall that the main theme for the 32nd APR held on 7th - 9th May 2018 was "*Disruption*". And disrupted we were! We were disrupted because the 14th General Elections in Malaysia were scheduled to be held in 9th May. We had to make adjustments for the better. Overall the 32nd APR turned out to be great success.
13. In my welcoming remarks at APR 32, I commented that participants might soon be witnessing a historic moment in Malaysia. As it turned out the 14th GE indeed became an important turning point in this country's history. What followed is now well documented and still debated. We are now witnessing a New Malaysia placing itself firmly in the Asia-Pacific and the world. Tomorrow, we will have the opportunity to listen to the Prime Minister speak about it.
14. I would like to also express my thanks and gratitude to the Honourable Dato' Saifuddin bin Abdullah, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, for the support and encouragement that he has given ISIS Malaysia and the APR. Dato' Saifuddin is no stranger to the APR process, being a panellist himself in 2015. We look forward to him introducing the Prime Minister tomorrow.

Ladies and gentlemen,

15. I wish to express sincere thanks and gratitude to the distinguished instigators and speakers for their readiness to share with us their time, knowledge and expertise in various ways and for their tremendous contribution towards enhancing the richness of the discussions during this conference.

16. I also extend heartfelt appreciation to our sponsors and supporters: the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, the Embassy of Japan, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau, Bank Muamalat Malaysia Berhad and Heritage Amanah Indonesia. Their generous contributions and assistance have once again made it possible for us to reconvene in Kuala Lumpur for the 33rd APR.

17. Thank you also to colleagues in ASEAN-ISIS for your unwavering support and confidence in the APR process.

18. Last but not least, I wish to convey my sincere appreciation to all participants for your continued support and active participation. Probing, thoughtful questions and insightful interventions from the floor are important components of a conference. It is such important inputs that form the distinctive hallmark of the Asia-Pacific Roundtable. I am confident that the discussions will be as lively and engaging as in the past.

19. I wish all of us a fruitful and enjoyable 33rd Asia-Pacific Roundtable.

Thank you.