

**CONCEPT PAPER FOR A SPECIAL STUDY GROUP ON THE
REPORT OF THE EAST ASIA VISION GROUP II
TO BE PRESENTED AT THE NEAT ANNUAL CONFERENCE
IN AUGUST 2013, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA**

Introduction and background

The Report of the East Asia Vision Group II (EAVG II) was transmitted to the ASEAN Plus Three Commemorative Summit on November 19, 2012 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. EAVG II carried out an assessment (or stock taking) of East Asia cooperation and the challenges faced, formulated a new vision and set out an agenda for cooperation. The agenda involved 33 recommendations in the following areas: (1) cross-sectoral cooperation, (2) political and security cooperation, (3) economic cooperation, (4) socio-cultural cooperation and (5) institutional arrangements.

EAVG II was entitled ‘Realising an East Asia Economic Community by 2020’ (EAEC 2020). It recommended that the EAEC 2020 be the “main pillar of our new vision” and be composed of four components viz. (1) single market and production base, which is to be achieved through the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), (2) financial stability, food and energy security, (3) equitable and sustainable development and (4) constructive contribution to the global economy.

Apart from the creation of an East Asia Economic Community, EAVG II also advocated more efforts in the political-security area so as to “maintain peace and stability and ensure progress and development in the region.” Specifically, it proposed cooperation to “promote good governance, strengthen the rule of law and promote and protect human rights through policy dialogue and capacity building activities”. It also advocated strengthening policy dialogue and capacity building and cooperation in non-traditional security issues.

Two further points should be noted about EAVG II. First, unlike the earlier East Asia Vision Group I Report issued in 2001, ASEAN Plus Three leaders did not establish an East Asia Study Group comprising senior officials to evaluate the Report and identify measures for implementation. Second, what is notable about EAVG II is that the existence and role of the Network of East Asian Think Tanks (NEAT) is not recognised at all, even in the section on institutional arrangements. (The East Asia Forum, on the other hand, rates a single mention.)

Proposal

NEAT is a direct product of EAVG I and has submitted nine memorandums to ASEAN Plus Three leaders. It has been active and productive since its formation.

Given that a continued strong Track Two approach is in the interest of East Asia, it is imperative that NEAT demonstrate its relevance to East Asia cooperation and the ambitious policies and programmes that will be undertaken. While the anomaly of addressing the role of NEAT can no longer be addressed within the context of EAVG II (since it has been submitted), it is proposed that NEAT establish a Special Study Group to undertake the following:-

- 1) Review EAVG II with a view to providing inputs to the ASEAN Plus Three and member governments on its assessment and recommendations;
- 2) Establish the role that NEAT plays in the current regional institutional architecture and highlight the contributions of NEAT to East Asia cooperation since its establishment;
- 3) Make specific proposals on how to increase NEAT's effectiveness, not least in the area of funding;
- 4) Present the above to the Annual Conference in Kuala Lumpur; and
- 5) Incorporate into the NEAT Memorandum and submit to ASEAN Plus Three Ministers

The work of the Special Study Group would appear to be time-sensitive. It is thus proposed that:-

- 1) There be an exchange of emails giving views and opinions on this Concept Paper;
- 2) The subject be extensively discussed at the upcoming Country Coordinators Meeting on 25 April 2013 in Penang, Malaysia and the Special Study Group approved;
- 3) Based on 2), written views and opinions from NEAT members on EAVG II would be invited;
- 4) One or more member countries may wish to volunteer to host a meeting of the Special Study Group. (If there are none and as the subject matter is of importance to all NEAT member countries, it might be an idea for each country to bear their own travel costs.);
- 5) The summary of all inputs be finalised at the CCM in August and then presented to the Annual Conference.

Conclusion

The above is submitted for the consideration of NEAT member countries. Kindly give views and opinions by 29 March 2013.