



ASEAN Leaders Discuss Security Challenges

OE Watch Commentary: The leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) gathered for a series of meetings in Manila in November, to discuss some of the top threats and challenges facing the ten member nations. Common concerns around terrorism, maritime issues, the North Korean nuclear and missile tests, and the Rohingya crisis are bringing the ten nations closer in an effort to counter the various threats.

According to the accompanying article, terrorism is a “serious, acute, and continuing threat for the region.” Examples of terrorism include the Marawi siege, which left over 1,000 people dead and displaced another 400,000 in the Philippines. The siege has since been brought under control. However, there is concern that Southeast Asia will soon see an increased flow of returning fighters from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), with the terror group having lost ground in the Middle East. As the article mentions, the group is “calling on supporters to conduct lone-wolf attacks.”

Maritime related issues brought up include piracy and drug trafficking. According to Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, these maritime issues “put a dent in our growth and disrupt the stability of both regional and global commerce” and “continue to endanger the very fabric of our society.”

Members of ASEAN are also concerned about the North Korean nuclear and missile tests conducted in the South China Sea and the crisis in which over 600,000 Rohingya have fled Myanmar’s Rakhine state for Bangladesh. The leaders of the ASEAN nations agreed on the need to stay united on key issues affecting the region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“Piracy and armed robbery in the seas put a dent in our growth and disrupt the stability of both regional and global commerce.”

- Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte

Source: Raul Dancel, “ASEAN Seeks Greater Resolve to Tackle Security Challenges,” *The Straits Online*, 14 November 2017. <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/asean-seeks-greater-resolve-to-tackle-security-challenges>

Fellow leaders, including Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, called for greater collaboration to counter terrorism, saying it “remains a serious, acute and continuing threat for the region.”

As ISIS loses ground in the Middle East, it is calling on supporters to conduct lone-wolf attacks, and South-east Asia will soon see an increased flow of returning fighters.

The Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia are already holding joint maritime and air patrols in the Sulu Sea, but experts have said more needs to be done to stem the flow of militants and terror funding by sharing intelligence and resources.

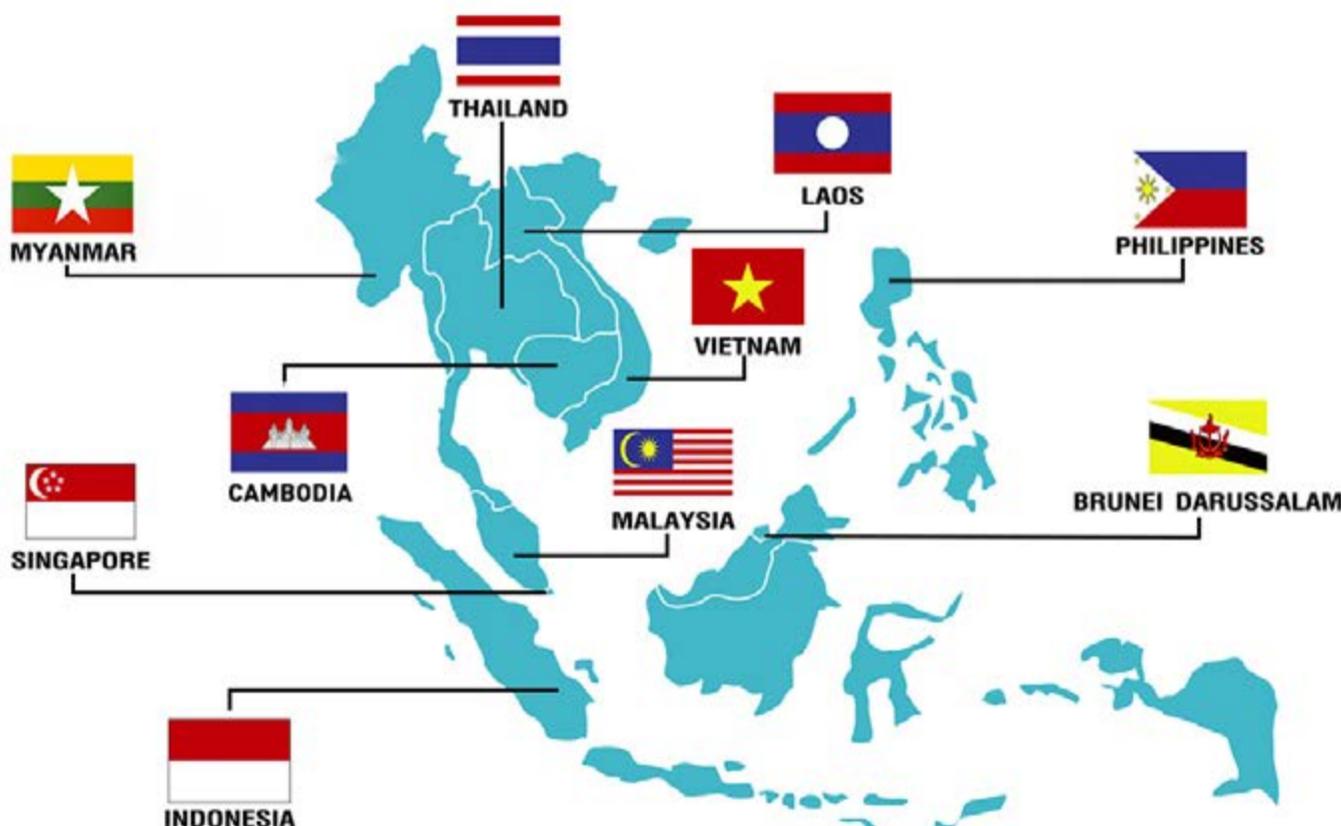
[Philippine President Rodrigo] Duterte also cited the problems of piracy and drug trafficking, saying, “Piracy and armed robbery in the seas put a dent in our growth and disrupt the stability of both regional and global commerce.”

Touching on the “menace of the illegal drugs trade,” he said it “continues to endanger the very fabric of our society.”

Leaders of Asean and China announced the start of talks on a code of conduct in the South China Sea, calling for its early conclusion.

The issue of North Korea’s recent nuclear and missile tests was also raised, with PM Lee reiterating the need to continue to call on Pyongyang to abide by international obligations and commitments...

Also raised was the ongoing crisis in which over 600,000 Rohingya have fled Myanmar’s Rakhine state for Bangladesh. Mr Duterte’s spokesman Harry Roque said two Asean members raised the issue, and Myanmar welcomed offers of humanitarian aid for the displaced.



Map showing ASEAN member states.

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