

## **Konferenzberichte**

### **Workshops on ASEAN-UN Co-operation for Peace and Preventive Diplomacy**

22-23 March in Bangkok and 6-7 July 1993 in Singapore

Even some of the seasoned ASEAN watchers were taken by surprise when the Association, at its 26th Ministerial Meeting, July 23-24 in Singapore, came forth with a bundle of initiatives.

A formal ASEAN Regional Forum of 18 members will discuss political and security issues throughout Asia with a first meeting envisaged for next year in Bangkok.

There are other proposals as well: China will be invited to sign the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation along with other countries outside South East Asia, a treaty that has been endorsed by the United Nations. There is the idea of setting up a regional peace-keeping centre, a centre for regional security studies; the creation of a regional register of arms transfers; increased co-operation in the Mekong River Basin and many other concrete suggestions.

If all this came as a surprise it definitely was a welcome and pleasant one. But it did not come out of the blue. The groundwork had been laid out carefully and its formation aided by a series of dialogues with different participants on different levels. Numerous meetings resulted in proposals, for example those made by the ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN-ISIS).

### **Preparatory Work**

An early stage of this process was marked by the volume *ASEAN at the Crossroads*, published by ISIS Kuala Lumpur in 1987. By the late 80s and early 90s ASEAN was pondering over a new identity in an environment influenced by global changes and stimulated by slowly but steadily increasing Asianization of Asian politics. This provided new challenges, new opportunities but also new responsibilities: for example, the settlement of the Cambodian question gradually gained momentum; the

Philippine government was trying to internationalize security issues (future of US military installations); China and Vietnam reached an understanding; the Soviet Union said "Goodbye" to the rest of the world; despite some internal disturbances Thailand was redefining and is carefully extending her role in continental South East Asia.

When it was generally recognized that much was in flux in the region, then, at the right time the right person had the right idea and got support from the right people and institutions. Dr. Sarasin Viraphol, a senior Thai diplomat and scholar saw that the time had come for a new quality of dialogues to discuss a new set of issues and also to reinvest old issues with new attitudes and fresh approaches. It was his imaginative initiative that led to the two "International Roundtables" on *Prospects for Regional Security Co-operation in South East Asia in the 1990's* in Manila (June) and Bangkok (November 1991). Participants came from Asia, the Pacific Region, North America and Europe. These meetings provided an atmosphere in which nobody felt excluded and everyone felt free to speak out. This success made a political quantum leap possible. Again, the initiative came from Dr. Sarasin Viraphol who wanted to substantiate what UN Secretary Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali had touched upon when he stated in his *Agenda for Peace* that regional institutions such as ASEAN have a potential that should be utilized for preventive diplomacy, peace-keeping, peace-making and post-conflict peace-building. Since such efforts were already underway in Cambodia, it was quite consistent for a Thai diplomat to probe deeper into scope, prospects and potential of ASEAN-UN cooperation.

In recent years the number and intensity of dialogues has increased; they took place on official and unofficial levels. However, there were some gaps as far as communication and participation was concerned. One of the main achievements of Ambassador Sarasin's approach was to bridge these gaps and to harmonize unofficial and official levels, i.e. to make them congruent and all this in an informal atmosphere, ideally suited for a free airing of ideas.

### **The Workshops**

Three workshops were planned, two have already taken place. The first was held in Bangkok from March 22-23 and was superbly organized by the International Studies Centre.



More than 60 participants and about 25 observers attended this event. No country from the region was missing as the organizers succeeded in bringing to Bangkok delegates from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar (Burma), and Vietnam. All four major groupings from Cambodia were represented. The presence of delegates from all South East Asian countries was a most remarkable success in itself and here again tribute must be paid to patient and skilful Thai diplomacy. Since the theme of the workshop was ASEAN-UN co-operation, the World Organization and its affiliated bodies had sent a number of senior officials. Linda Perkin represented the Secretary General and the delegation from ESCAP was led by its Executive Secretary, Rafeeuddin Ahmed, who attended the entire workshop. Organized in eight sessions, eight papers were discussed. But there was no long-winded reading of manuscripts as papers were presented in a concise fashion with emphasis on defining issues and making concrete proposals. Most of the time was devoted to extensive discussions.

In his opening remarks Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, Deputy Foreign Minister of Thailand, and, like Dr. Sarasin Viraphol, a Harvard-trained scholar, discussed the role of nation states in the new world system and the need for a sober reality check. Identifying forces that are shaping the world today he concluded that the cumulative effect of all these agents of change is that sovereign governments will continue to face challenges no less daunting than those existing under the Cold War, with co-operation being one way to weather these changes that affect us all. And here co-operation between ASEAN and the UN can help to compensate for weaknesses that each organization may suffer from singly. Dr. Surin Pitsuwan formulated a set of concrete questions to be addressed during the workshop. The keynote speech was delivered by elder statesman Dr. Thanat Khoman who also presented a paper on *ASEAN-UN Co-operation toward 'Preventive Diplomacy'*. Assessing international developments and likely trends he was at his critical and inspirational best.

In the first sessions a broad range of issues, problems and proposals was laid out, followed by perspectives from the UN and ASEAN as well as views from other Asia-Pacific countries. The following day three broad subjects were extensively dealt with: Politico-military security issues, non-traditional security issues and concrete measures for promoting preventive diplomacy. Among others a comprehensive set of proposals for co-operation presented by ESCAP was discussed.

In the evening of the first day participants met with Anand Panyarachun, former Prime Minister of Thailand. He described uncertainties

and opportunities after the Cold War, analysed the position of the UN in the new international order, examined the potential of certain concrete measures for ASEAN-UN co-operation and stressed that such a forum must be inclusive rather than exclusive. He concluded that a long-term goal might be to demonstrate that a greater role for countries in the developing world would make the UN more effective, not less so, and that this would pave the way for reforms of the Security Council and make the UN process more democratic and equitable.

The workshop in Bangkok featured many very positive components, above all an atmosphere that ideally promoted a rich and inspiring flow as well as discussion of ideas in which all felt free to participate. Proposals and scenarios covering a wide range of issues could be shared and it was generally accepted that while there is still no general consensus on some points, discussions are nevertheless beneficial to all and should therefore be continued. Thus the workshop was a very successful undertaking in two respects: form and content. This pleasant, inspiring atmosphere was preserved, cultivated and again present at the second workshop.

Forty participants and about 25 observers attended this gathering in Singapore, 6-7 July 1993, which was organised jointly by The Institute of Policy Studies (Singapore) and The International Studies Centre (Thailand).

In his opening address, Wong Kan Seng, Singapore's Minister of Foreign Affairs, said that regional organizations can play a more active role in preventive diplomacy with the United Nations following as a peace-keeper. He observed that ASEAN cannot work by itself to promote regional peace and security and that there is a recognition within the Association that regional co-operation, in an increasingly interdependent world, must extend beyond the borders of South East Asia.

The International Studies Centre had compiled a comprehensive summary of issues and questions raised as well as of the proposals made during the first workshop. The second workshop could thus concentrate on specific topics: Cambodia (paper by Thailand), national resources competition (paper by Vietnam), territorial and boundary disputes (paper by Indonesia), Treaty of Amity and Co-operation (paper by Malaysia) and the role of regional groupings and bodies in co-operation with the UN (paper by Singapore).

The task of the workshop was to discuss a realistic agenda, to identify appropriate issues and concepts of preventive diplomacy as a practical



guideline for action and to define further measures and opportunities for small states to play a greater role and to increase the benefits of multilateralism. ASEAN has the advantage of a system of dialogues with an emphasis on anticipation, on early warning and detection. The fact that there are not too many formal members guarantees the workability and flexibility of the institution. It was generally felt that a fairly compact ASEAN seems to be appropriate for the time being. That of course does not preclude the broadening of the dialogue; on the contrary, a firmly established ASEAN is the prerequisite for such an enlarged forum. Participants strongly felt that Cambodia should be involved in ASEAN as are Laos and Vietnam.

A point most often raised was: "what are the practical implications?" Among other topics the situation in Cambodia and post-UNTAC Cambodia were discussed in great detail. How, for example, can one of the biggest problems be overcome: the almost complete lack of competent human resources in the country. The participants did not shun away from delicate issues. The situation in the South China Sea was discussed freely and the participants from China raised significant points that deserve attention and interest. Skirmishes over the Spratlys took place in the atmosphere of the Cold War and a Chinese delegate observed that the situation and the political environment have changed. The People's Republic endorsed the *ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea*, signed in Manila on July 22, 1992 and all parties involved are engaged in fostering confidence-building measures. There are intensified talks between Vietnam and China and work progresses in the two working committees, one chaired by China on resources, the other by the Philippines on marine sciences.

Many proposals were discussed for co-operation between ASEAN and the UN which in due time will be made public. One aspect is the task of peace-building and peace-insurance. Training of civilian and military peace-keepers was discussed. How can people from the region be prepared for such assignments? How should ASEAN and the UN cooperate in such a venture? What are the financial aspects of such peace operations etc? In this connection the creation of a regional peace-keeping centre was suggested.

Co-chairmen of the workshop were former ambassador, Professor Tommy Koh, director of The Institute of Policy Studies and Dr. Sarasin Viraphol. As in Bangkok, so again in Singapore, a most amicable atmosphere prevailed thanks to the excellent organization and the

charming manner of both chairmen who succeeded in integrating all participants and involving them in the discussions.

The third workshop is planned for the second half of January 1994. A tentative list of topics comprises the following items:

- Concrete agenda for co-operation between ASEAN and UN,
- mechanisms to fulfill this agenda,
- Cambodia as a case study (UNTAC phase and post-election developments),
- peace-building beyond Cambodia (all of Indochina),
- establishment of a peace-training complex (in and for the Asia-Pacific region),
- likely trends that might affect peace in the region.

It was no coincidence that the second workshop took place in Singapore. After its most successful realization, about two weeks later ASEAN's ministerial meeting as well as the post-ministerial dialogues were also held in Singapore. Some of the workshops' proposals had been forwarded to these conferences.

As for the Regional Forum, the ASEAN Secretary-General Datuk Ajit Singh said that it will in the long run generate its own momentum and become the focus of all matters relating to political and security issues.

In the *Far Eastern Economic Review* Frank Ching described the creation of the Forum as a "feather in ASEAN's cap."

This feather was not picked up accidentally along the way but deliberately created. In the process diplomats, politicians, scholars and many others joined hands, with the series of conferences and workshops initiated by Dr. Sarasin Viraphol playing a very special role.

*Werner Pfennig*

### **4th Sri Lanka Studies Conference**

10.-14. August in Colombo

Bereits zum zweiten Mal wurde diese, alle zwei Jahre stattfindende sozialwissenschaftliche Konferenz in Colombo abgehalten. Dies hat sich in