



Vice Admiral Karambir Singh Vice Chief of Naval Staff, Indian Navy

Opening Remarks

1. Admiral Ravindra C Wijegunaratne, the Chief of the Defence Staff, Vice Admiral Travis Sinniah, Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy, Chiefs of Navy of participating countries, eminent personalities representing various nations in this Dialogue, distinguished representatives from independent think tanks, Service Officers, Ladies and Gentlemen¹.

2. It is indeed an honour and a proud privilege for me to be here today at the 8th edition of the Galle Dialogue and interact with such an eminent gathering. I sincerely thank the Sri Lanka Navy for affording me this opportunity.

3. Standing here in the majestic city of Colombo, overlooking the vast Indian Ocean, one cannot miss the overwhelmingly maritime character of this Nation and its people. The venue is, therefore, most apt to discuss matters maritime.

4. The Galle Dialogue last year, had fruitful discussions on the theme 'Benefits of Strategic Maritime Partnerships'. Speaking on the subject, Admiral Sunil Lanba, the Indian CNS, had identified 'Information Sharing' as one of the

foremost areas for developing strategic maritime partnerships. This year's theme 'Greater Maritime Visibility for Enhanced Maritime Security' takes this thought forward.

5. Ladies and Gentlemen, significance of the oceans is understood well by all of us and needs no reiteration. Coastal regions of the world account for over 40% of the global population as also more than 61% of global GNP¹. As we are aware, there was a period of 'sea blindness' in the history of the Indian Sub-continent which led to its subjugation by the then colonial powers. Consequently, the industrial revolution could not be capitalised upon. India has not forgotten the lessons learnt from history. Speaking at the Indian Ocean Conference, here in Colombo on 31 Aug this year, India's External Affairs Minister articulated the importance of the Indian Ocean when she said and I quote "we see the Indian Ocean as not just a water body, but a global stage for continued economic, social and cultural dialogue". She went on to add "...as we envisage the Indian Ocean as an engine for growth and prosperity in our region and beyond, it is of utmost importance that these waters remain safe and secure. "Unquote.

1 . www.worldbank.org/en/topic/environment/brief.oceans

Maritime Security – Concerns and Challenges

6. Over the next few minutes, I would like to share the Indian Navy's perspective on the concerns and challenges to the paradigm of maritime security and put forth certain suggestions on how these could be effectively addressed.

7. To my mind, the traditional maritime security concerns such as inter-state disputes essentially arise out of a certain 'trust deficit'. This, in turn, can be attributed to a lack of transparency in strategic intent. This is further complicated by narrow, over-nationalistic interpretations which tend to undermine established dispute-resolution mechanisms. The maritime domain, because of its strategic and economic significance, is witnessing increased competition, resulting in fragile security situation at many places. In the traditional domain, unilateralism and non-adherence to international norms by certain countries constitute the main cause of concern. On the contrary, major territorial disputes can be resolved satisfactorily if the countries involved are driven by the spirit of cooperation and respect for international laws. The maritime boundary delimitation between India and Bangladesh maritime boundary in 2014, amongst others, is an example where both the countries willingly accepted the Permanent Court of Arbitration award.

8. While nations would continue to evolve appropriate strategies to deal with traditional threats; several non-traditional challenges continue to confront the global maritime community. Most of these threats could ideally be checked if national and regional maritime agencies work unitedly for a common purpose. The effectiveness of global efforts against piracy off the Horn of Africa and West Arabian Sea and initiatives such as coordinated patrols in the Strait of Malacca and Copper off the coast of South-East Africa are some of the examples of cooperative maritime efforts. However, large parts of the maritime domain still lack effective surveillance and response mechanisms, allowing on-traditional threats to grow unchecked. There is also a possibility of crimes with similar modus-operandi coming together and mutate into

more sinister forms. A nexus between maritime terrorism and piracy with drug smuggling or gun running, or, existing human trafficking networks facilitating large-scale migrations or relocation of radical elements are some of the scenarios that are a distinct reality today. Large scale Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing leading to adverse economic and ecological consequences for the littorals such as the coastal East Africa and outlying island territories are a cause of concern. In addition to all this, adverse impacts of climate change on human security, visible in the form of increasing frequency of cyclones and frequent flooding of low-lying areas are relevant in the context of maritime nations.

9. You would all agree with me that the security concerns in the maritime domain have a distinct hybrid, transnational character. Most security infringements at sea have connections across several countries - the flag of the vessel, port of loading and unloading, origin of cargo, nationalities of crew and owner - all lead to different corners of the world. In addition to the difficulties experienced in apprehending such vessels when involved in transnational crimes, numerous problems are faced post-apprehension due to legal issues.

10. Another important consideration in the paradigm of maritime security arises from the need to balance national interests with international concerns. Various factors such as differing political viewpoints and historical animosities tend to overshadow the larger good. Over and above these 'state policies', presence and influence of state-sponsored non-state actors, including in the maritime domain further complicate the overall picture.

11. A deeper analysis reveals that the challenges in the maritime domain are rather difficult to be dealt with by a single country or a Navy on its own. The vastness of the area, diverse nature of challenges and differences in capabilities necessitate that we work together to enhance overall maritime security.

Enablers for Enhanced Maritime Security

12. I shall now share my views on a few enablers that, to my mind, are critical for achieving effective maritime cooperation.

13. Ladies and Gentlemen, I believe that an effective maritime cooperation for enhancing maritime security would require a layered approach. These layers must be able to function independently as well as in tandem with each other. The foundation would need to be laid by means of national efforts wherein seamless integration is achieved between different national maritime agencies. This could be taken further to bilateral agreements where two nations evolve mutually beneficial cooperative structures. Building upon these bilateral structures, commonalities at the regional level may be easier to establish and that would form the next layer of multilateral associations. This type of a layered approach would help countries to align and coordinate activities at the regional or global level.

14. To facilitate a cooperative approach, countries involved must share a 'common vision of maritime security'. The 'Malacca Strait Patrols (MSP)' stands out as a successful example where countries in the region agreed to a common vision and established a set of practical cooperative security measures.

15. The maritime security agencies would also need to be enabled by appropriate national as well as international legal provisions to take requisite action against maritime threats.

16. Collection, analysis and sharing of actionable information gathered through technical means and supported by HUMINT is another crucial element.

17. Also of importance are mutually agreed Standard Operating Procedures amongst the maritime nations. We need to coordinate our efforts at the operational and tactical levels to optimise resources. Imbibing lessons learnt from effective maritime initiatives such as patrolling in the Gulf of Aden would be helpful to our efforts in this regard.

IN's Initiatives

18. Ladies and Gentlemen, many countries in the Indian Ocean Region, including India, figure in the category of 'developing nations', wherein uplifting the well-being of our people will remain the top priority. It may, therefore, not be economically viable for every country in the IOR to maintain formidable maritime forces. Given its geostrategic location, India is fully seized of its responsibilities towards ensuring peace and stability in the region for the common good. India strongly believes that the most optimal way to make progress is to generate 'local solutions for local problems' and adopt a collaborative approach.

19. The vision of the Government of India, 'sabkasaath sabkavikaas' (collective action, inclusive growth) manifests itself as much in the international arena as it does on the domestic front. Launch of the South Asian Satellite (SAS) in May this year is one such example. This project is set to boost communication and disaster management links among our neighbours. With special reference to the maritime domain, the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India has articulated his vision of 'Security And Growth for All in the Region' which goes by the acronym SAGAR, meaning 'the ocean' in the Hindi language. Other initiatives such as the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) and Project MAUSAM are viable pan-regional connectivity initiatives, based on universally recognised international norms, prudent financing and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of participating nations.

20. Going by these guiding principles, the Indian Navy earnestly extends a helping hand to the friendly maritime nations, based on their request. These efforts are aimed to build maritime 'capacity' in terms of hardware and infrastructure, as also enhance 'capabilities' and necessary skills. While assisting in their capacity building and capability enhancement endeavours, the Indian Navy maintains a 'non-invasive approach' and due care is exercised to inculcate a strong sense of local ownership. Let me highlight a few of these initiatives very briefly.

21. The Indian Navy remains operationally engaged with several navies across the world in the form of anti-piracy patrols, EEZ surveillance, coordinated patrols and bilateral or multilateral exercises. Our engagements are not just limited to security cooperation but also extend to cooperation in the field of hydrography as well as training and technical support.

22. Our strong belief in the effectiveness of maritime cooperation has led the Indian Navy to take initiatives such as the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and MILAN. This is where, I would say, that the trust is built and we hope for a continued mutually beneficial partnership with every nation in the IOR.

23. The IONS has grown in strength over the years and now has a membership of 23 littoral navies and nine observers. Let me take this opportunity to express my admiration for the outstanding work being done by the three IONS Working Groups on Maritime Security, HADR and Information Sharing and Interoperability. I must also congratulate the Bangladesh Navy for taking the lead in planning the first International Multilateral Maritime SAR Exercise (IMMSAREX) under the IONS construct which is scheduled next month.

24. The Indian Navy also hosts MILAN series of interactions as an effective forum to promote professional interaction among regional navies. MILAN 2014 saw participation of 17 countries and we hope to see a larger participation in the next edition in March 2018. This would also include a multilateral maritime exercise.

25. This month-end, we will be hosting officers from 16 friendly countries of the IOR for an exercise at sea which will give them a glimpse of Blue Water operations of the Indian Navy. Next month, the Indian Navy is also hosting the inaugural edition of the Goa Maritime Conclave (GMC), wherein Chiefs of regional navies and maritime agencies would brainstorm collective strategies for addressing maritime security challenges.

26. The Indian Navy has also made progress in improving Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) through integration of coastal, seaborne and space-based sensors. A number of bilateral and multilateral agreements have been inked with partner nations for White Shipping Information Exchange (WSIE). In addition, Coastal Surveillance Radar System (CSRS) chains have been developed through collaborative efforts with IOR Island nations and are being pursued with several other countries for mutual benefit. The Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) of the Indian Navy is emerging as a useful information hub for processing and analysing white shipping information. Plans are also afoot to operationalize an Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) to further consolidate this process.

Recommendations

27. Before concluding, I would like to make six quick recommendations.

- ♦ Firstly, continuing with our efforts to enhance maritime domain awareness in the region, we need to pursue technological solutions to make the remaining maritime areas less opaque. Efforts in the respective national zones need to be complemented with collaborative enterprise to create transparency on the high seas.
- ♦ Secondly, there is a need for creating enabling infrastructure that can undertake a meaningful analysis of the data generated from MDA sources. We need a set-up that could process 'information', identify potential as well as actual threats and present cogent, actionable intelligence to the maritime security agencies.
- ♦ Thirdly, in order to maximise the output from our information sharing mechanisms, we must work upon our communication interoperability and evolve a universal format for implementation.
- ♦ There is a need to gradually

increase the scope and frequency of joint training and naval exercises to further fine-tune our ability to respond collectively.

- ◆ We must also carry forward our deliberations to develop enabling provisions under existing international regulations for maritime security agencies so that they can combat evolving security threats.

- ◆ Last but not the least, the maritime security agencies of all countries need to propagate the importance of maritime security among the populace as well as policy-makers of their respective countries. This would help generate an effective and willing approach at the national level towards ensuring 'greater maritime cooperation for enhanced maritime security'.

Conclusion

28. To conclude, I would like to reiterate that enhanced cooperation and coordination amongst maritime nations is the 'mantra' to make the maritime domain more transparent. However, as we propel ahead in our pursuit for

comprehensive maritime security; we also need to exercise due caution in our approach. I say 'caution' because the concept of security for any country should be based on the twin pillars of 'self-governance' and 'self-sufficiency'. Looking for quick-fix solutions may lead to situations where strategic autonomy of a nation becomes dependent on external crutches. Therefore, we need to take a long-term perspective so that the freedom to govern our destinies is retained within us. The entire endeavour of cooperation should be based on a genuine spirit of equality and must be guided by the cardinal principle of 'respect' for own as well as other's sovereignty.

29. In the end, on behalf of the Chief of the Naval Staff and all my shipmates back home, let me once again congratulate the Sri Lanka Navy for hosting the Galle Dialogue. I hope the airline check-in counter at Colombo airport will not charge me for extra baggage due to the weight of the many wonderful memories which I shall carry home from this very well organised event. But then, I am sure the Sri Lanka Navy has already thought of it too and passed suitable directives!!!

30. Thank you, fair winds and following seas.