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Good Afternoon.

Firstly, I'd like to thank Vice Admiral Ranasinghe, Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy, I appreciate the invitation to speak to this forum and the support the Sri Lanka Navy has provided in both the planning and execution of this event.

Today I am going to speak to you about the importance of sharing maritime domain information and optimizing through collaboration. For many of us this is crucial given our reliance on the ocean.

I have a short video to start with. This video highlights the Royal Australian Navy's capability, which plays an integral part in the security and safety of our maritime domain.

Although our navy is quite small in comparison to many of the navies represented here – we are busier than ever. This small clip you've just seen shows you what the Royal Australian Navy has been up to recently, but more importantly the direction we are heading.

Before I talk you about the importance of sharing maritime domain information I would like to provide some context to my presentation.

Context

Australia's maritime domain is large and complex. Sharing no land borders with other nations and possessing 36,000 kilometres of coastline, the Australian Exclusive Economic Zone (AEEZ) is the third largest in the world covering 4% of the earth's surface. Australia is a maritime nation with an economy underpinned by international ocean-borne trade; the sea is the most efficient highway for much of our domestic coastal trading. In 2015–16, 5,540 uniquely identified cargo ships made a total of 30,056 port calls importing AUD201.8 billion and exporting AUD218.9 billion worth of goods. Australia relies on sea transport for 99 per cent of our exports.

As a maritime nation, like many of us are, the importance of maritime security and open sea lines of communication are paramount to our national economy and economic prosperity and we are obligated in accordance with various international conventions to provide a safe, secure, environmentally sound, efficient and sustainable shipping environment.

In Australia the maritime environment is front and centre of our defence strategy. In the 2016 Defence White Paper, Australia promotes three key interests where the importance of

the maritime environment is self-evident: '…a secure, resilient Australia, with secure northern approaches and proximate sea lines of communication; a secure nearer region, encompassing maritime South East Asia and the South Pacific; and a stable Indo-Pacific region and a rules-based global order'. As a result, in 2017, Australia released its Naval Shipbuilding Plan which outlines the Government's vision for the Australian naval shipbuilding enterprise and the significant investment required in coming decades in order to meet these interests.

As mariners we understand more than most the significance of the maritime domain. The oceans, unlike the land, have no physical borders and as such safe and secure seas are equally important for us all. Information sharing and collaboration is the cornerstone of this. While Maritime Domain Awareness, or MDA, as a system is a whole of government responsibility, encompassing a myriad of different initiatives, platforms and models, we are the practitioners. Our contribution to MDA as sailors is at the operational level and we are the primary entity which interfaces with others. Subsequently, our partnerships and our relationships – bilateral and multilateral – are crucial when it comes to optimizing our knowledge of the maritime domain.

Challenges of information sharing

With these relationships "one size does not fit all" when it comes to information sharing agreements and the enabling technical mechanisms. While on a holistic level it is easy to understand that information sharing has many benefits, on the operational level it may not be that easy. A number of factors come into play including levels of trust, differences in technological maturity and sophistication and willingness to share. These are and will continue to be our biggest challenges when it comes to MDA. Without inputs, both classified and unclassified, military, law enforcement and commercial we risk being blind to what the problem we are trying to face. At the heart of this effort lies a paradox; information and intelligence, the cornerstone of

an effective MDA system, is only of use if it can be shared, acknowledging the more widely it is shared the more subject it is to compromise. The way we overcome these challenges with our existing and emerging partners is through our interactions and exercising together. The more we operate together the more we trust each other and the better we are at bridging the technological gaps.

I now want to focus on how we can be more effective at sharing information - which I believe is about building relationships founded on trust and a willingness to share.

Effective information sharing

Last month I hosted 19 major fleet units, 4 minor war vessels, 1 submarine and 21 aircraft and 59 observers from 26 countries; including the Sri Lanka Navy Ship Sindurala for Exercise KAKADU. The aim of the exercise was to build confidence through Cooperation in order to increase our collective Capability. It is these three pillars that form the basis of effective information sharing.

Confidence

Confidence under pins all that we do together. In the maritime security context, this means working together to provide interoperability and information-sharing benefits that can ensure a high level of responsiveness. Increased participation in bilateral and multilateral exercises across the region develops relationships based on common values and subsequently creates an environment built on mutual respect and trust. The only way to achieve a collaborative and productive environment is through confidence in each other.

While we are not the policy makers or the ones who dictate our national priorities we are the executioners of that intent. At all levels, we must recognise the value of confidence in our relationships - People to People, Ship to ship and Navy to Navy. In the dynamic strategic environment in which we find ourselves, rather than stepping back from our region, there is a clear need to engage more broadly and more deeply.

Cooperation

From the smallest island nations to the largest global superpowers, we all prosper from greater maritime security – built on the foundation of agreed rules for how all nations behave at sea. Respect for freedom of navigation must be maintained by all nations, particularly through our complex area. Maritime security and safety, cannot and will not be achieved without a collaborative approach, particularly when it comes to information sharing.

While there may be great diversity in our political and economic institutions, as mariners with expansive experience and knowledge of our oceans, we really do understand the sentiment that 'A rising tide lifts all boats' –– We thrive together or we fail together.

Capability

Being capable in a region with tight maritime boundaries and a myriad of common and shared interest's means we must foster and continue to develop our own capabilities and support those of our neighbors. The challenges we face in the maritime domain are not challenges that we face individually but are things we all experience.

For Australia, The Australian Pacific Patrol Boat Program has been a highly successful Defence Cooperation Program which has had remarkable benefits for Australia and the 12 Pacific Island countries which it supports. Enabling capability is just as important as building our own capability and is a tangible way in which we can optimise collaboration.

Conclusion

Sharing Maritime domain information builds confidence, fosters cooperation and enhances capability – it is the key to maritime security. For all of us, the vastness of the oceans, the great length of the shorelines and the size of port areas provide significant challenges for us to individually address any threat to our safety our security. The maritime domain is the cornerstone of the livelihood of humanity, habitat, resources and transport routes, it connects states and regions and makes otherwise distant nations, neighbors. No one country, Department or Agency holds all of the authorities and capabilities to achieve effective Maritime Domain Awareness. MDA can only be achieved through a collaborative network of partners drawing upon their cumulative authorities and capabilities. It is only through unity of effort that the security, safety, economic and environmental objectives associated with MDA can be achieved.