

**14<sup>th</sup> Co-operation Forum under the Co-operative Mechanism  
between the Littoral States and User of the Straits  
on Safety of Navigation and Environmental Protection  
In the Straits of Malacca and Singapore  
Singapore, 31 July 2023**

**Welcoming Remarks by the Honourable Captain Mohamad Halim Ahmed  
Director General of Marine, Malaysia Marine Department**

*Thank you, Masters of Ceremony*

- 1    **Mr Chee Hong Tat**  
Acting Minister for Transport, Republic of Singapore
- 2    **Professor Tommy Koh**  
Ambassador-at-large, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- 3    **Capt Antoni Arif Priadi**  
Acting Director General of Sea Transportation,  
Directorate General of Sea Transportation (DGST), Ministry of Transportation, Republic of Indonesia
- 4    **Mr. Teo Eng Dih**  
Chief Executive, Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore

*Distinguished delegates, representatives, and esteemed participants,*

It is an honour to stand before you today as the Head of Delegation for Malaysia, addressing the 14<sup>th</sup> Co-operation Forum. On behalf of Malaysia, I emphasize our unwavering commitment as littoral states to safeguarding the vital Straits of

Malacca and Singapore – a crucial artery connecting the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean – in alignment with Article 43 of UNCLOS.

The Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS) have long been the lifeblood of global trade, facilitating the passage of ships carrying essential goods and commodities between East and West. The ever-increasing number of ships transiting this strategic waterway underscores its growing significance in international maritime commerce.

However, as we gather here today, we must address emerging challenges that may impact the safe navigation and sustainability of the Straits. One such concern is the advent of Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS), heralding a new era in shipping technology. While offering promising efficiency and safety benefits, we must ensure the seamless integration of MASS into the maritime domain. Addressing potential cybersecurity threats and maintaining human oversight are paramount to harnessing the full potential of this transformative technology.

Additionally, the growing size of ships, in particular the container vessels transiting SOMS poses navigational challenges at several choke points along the route. As littoral states, we must optimize our navigational infrastructure, ensuring the safe passage of these larger vessels while safeguarding the delicate marine ecosystem from adverse environmental impacts.

New risks such as the loss of containers during transit have far-reaching consequences, both environmental and economic. Strengthening our emergency response capabilities and fostering cooperation is crucial to

mitigating the risks associated with such incidents. Our collective actions must not contribute to global economic chaos in the event of catastrophic incidents leading to the closure of the Straits.

Furthermore, the shift from analogue to digital maritime communications calls for a harmonized system among Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore – the three littoral states of the Straits. A unified communication framework will ensure safer navigation for all vessels while preserving the marine ecosystem and addressing environmental concerns, including greenhouse gas emissions and underwater noise pollution from ships.

*Distinguished delegates, representatives, and esteemed participants,*

In our commitment to safeguarding the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS) as a vital global shipping lane, Malaysia recognizes the need to adapt and evolve our existing measures in response to changing maritime traffic dynamics. We are actively considering the extension of the STRAITREP (Straits Reporting System), established in 1998, further north on the west side of the Straits. Expanding the STRAITREP will provide comprehensive data on traffic patterns, enabling informed decision-making and enhancing navigation safety and efficiency.

Moreover, we must be proactive in anticipating potential challenges stemming from future infrastructure developments within the Straits. Implementing a traffic separation scheme and designating precautionary areas are essential to ensure the safety and integrity of the Straits amidst these developments.

The establishment of a traffic separation scheme in the eastern gateway of the Straits is particularly vital, where vessels from different directions converge. By defining specific lanes for inbound and outbound traffic, we can significantly reduce collision risks and ensure a smoother, safer passage for all vessels.

As we embark on these endeavours, collaboration and consultation among littoral states are imperative. A unified approach in managing traffic within the Straits will fortify its safety and security.

Let us not overlook the environmental aspect of our actions. As we pursue change, we must diligently assess the ecological impact and prioritize measures to preserve the pristine waters and biodiversity of the Straits.

In conclusion, Malaysia reaffirms its unwavering dedication to protecting the Straits of Malacca and Singapore as a global vital shipping lane. Embracing technology responsibly and fostering regional cooperation are the cornerstones of ensuring the safety, security, and sustainability of this critical waterway.

I extend my deepest gratitude to all participating nations, international organizations, and stakeholders for their collaboration and support. Together, let us navigate the waters ahead and secure a prosperous and sustainable future for all maritime nations dependent on the SOMS.

Thank you for your attention, and let us continue our efforts to protect and preserve the SOMS as a vital artery of international maritime commerce.

Thank you.