

COMMITTEE INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No. 1)

Senator Kimberley Kitching asked the Department of Defence the following question, upon notice, on 23 August 2021:

The Defence submission notes a number of ASEAN-led dialogues and working groups on regional security that Defence engages in, as well as multilateral agreements and exercises that exist to support Pacific regionalism.

- a. What are the key benefits of these arrangements from an Australian Defence perspective?
- b. Are there any of these mechanisms that require particular focus from Australia at this time?

Senator Kimberley Kitching – The Department of Defence provides the following answer to the Senator's question:

ASEAN sits at the core of the Australian Government's vision for a peaceful, inclusive and resilient Indo-Pacific region based on international law. Participating in ASEAN-led dialogues and Experts' Working Groups provides Australia with regular opportunities for senior engagement, helps reinforce rules and norms of behaviour, and provides an invaluable framework for practical defence cooperation. Australia participates in each of the seven ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus Experts' Working Groups and currently co-chairs the Experts' Working Group on Military Medicine.

In the Pacific, Defence engages within the existing regional security architecture and supports enhanced regionalism. Australia shares strong and enduring security partnerships in the Pacific, and our involvement in regional forums ensures we can support greater regional cooperation and address shared security challenges. Our participation in these forums also allows us to promote a rules-based international order that respects the sovereignty of all states, large and small. This includes support for laws and treaties, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and international norms which encourage economic growth and patterns of cooperation. Most importantly, engagement in these forums allows Defence to collaborate and cooperate with our partners to support a sovereign, stable and resilient Indo-Pacific.

COMMITTEE INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No. 2)

Senator Kimberley Kitching asked the Department of Defence the following question, upon notice, on 23 August 2021:

How useful are regional institutions and groupings in addressing issues such as the ongoing disputes in the South China Sea? Can Australia play a role in strengthening the ability of regional mechanisms to deal with these issues?

Senator Kimberley Kitching – The Department of Defence provides the following answer to the Senator's question:

These issues are best addressed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Defence notes and has nothing to add to the response provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to this identical question, their question No. 4.