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**MH370 PRESS BRIEFING BY HISHAMMUDDIN HUSSEIN
MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND ACTING MINISTER OF TRANSPORT**

Introductory statement

I would like to begin this statement with a message.

On behalf of the Malaysian government and specifically the MH370 SAR team, we would like to extend our deepest sympathies and condolences to those on board the tragic incident involving the South Korea ferry that departed from Incheon planned for Jeju. We empathise and can imagine how difficult it can be for the families and the SAR team coping with the situation. All our thoughts and prayers are with them.

I will now continue with MH370.

We have now entered day 43 of the search operation for MH370. It has been six weeks since we started the operation in which we have continuously refined the search area in the quest to locate the missing aircraft. We have pursued every possible lead presented to us at this stage and with every passing day, the search has become more difficult.

Search updates

On Thursday, I spoke with Angus Houston and he has briefed me on the images captured from the Bluefin – 21 AUV. I can confirm that the Bluefin - 21 has captured clear and sharp images of the seabed while conducting its search mission in the underwater search area. However, from all 6 missions conducted, no contacts of interest have been found to date. Bluefin-21 AUV's seventh mission has commenced this morning.

From the images, Angus has also informed me that the terrain of the seabed is undulating and that the Bluefin – 21 is focusing on the immediate search area based on the pings that have been detected. Some media reports have stated that it would take the Bluefin-21 anywhere from six weeks to two months to scan the entire underwater search area. This is incorrect. The immediate search area that the Bluefin – 21 is now scouring should be completed within the next week.

As Prime Minister Abbott stated earlier this week, and I quote –

“We will regroup and reconsider the SAR operations, if there are no new updates in the given time” – end quote.

I have to stress that this is not to stop operations but to also consider other approaches which may include widening the scope of the search and utilising other assets that could be relevant in the search operation.

The search will always continue. It is just a matter of approach. All efforts will be intensified for the next few days with regards to the underwater search.

I would also like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Malaysian government, to again thank Australia on narrowing the search area and doing all they can in the search for MH370.

Updates on Ministerial Committees

As I announced a few weeks ago, three ministerial committees have been established. They have been working tirelessly and I will now update you on their progress.

The next of kin committee, led by Hamzah Zainuddin, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, is working closely with various Governments especially the countries whose nationals were on board MH370. From the meetings with the respective embassies and high commissions, various issues that needed urgent attention were addressed.

Hamzah has also discussed with his counterparts in Beijing and both sides have exchanged views and discussed ways and means to deal with the situation with regards to the families of those on board.

The technical committee, led by Aziz Kaprawi, Deputy Minister of Transport, has developed and drafted the proposed structure and Terms of Reference of the Aircraft Accident Investigation Team For MH 370 in

accordance with the Malaysian Civil Aviation Regulations 1996 (MCAR 1996) and Annex 13 - Aircraft Accident and Incident Investigation, Chicago Convention.

The structure was developed after consulting the experts from the Air Accidents Investigation Branch, United Kingdom (AAIB), National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), United States, Australian Transportation Safety Board (ATSB) and Air Accident Investigation Department, China. The proposed team would comprise of local and international experts.

We have also spoken with the ASEAN secretariat on the possibility of appointing some of our counterparts to come onboard. This is in accordance with the ASEAN Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation Relating to Aircraft Accident and Incident Investigation that was signed in 2008.

The Asset Deployment committee has identified private companies that have the capabilities for deep water salvage and recovery work, and other national assets that can be deployed to support this operation. Local companies such as DEFTECH and Boustead have been tasked to discuss with their international collaborative partners such as SAAB, DCNS (Direction des Constructions Navales) and others to identify the relevant assets and instruments required for the search operation.

I have also been in consultations with Jean Paul Troadec given his experience in handling Air France Flight 447 in deploying private commercial assets to assist in their search operation.

Concluding remarks

As we move on to the next phase of the search, I am humbled that more friends from other nations have expressed their willingness to assist and support our efforts to locate MH370.

Thank you.

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