

**THE SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTE:
AN UPDATE**

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Executive Summary

1. Tension in the South China Sea has continued to brew since the Scarborough Shoal stand-off in April 2012.
2. The Philippines has employed a string of measures, including convening a meeting of four ASEAN claimant countries in the South China Sea issue and making the first submission to an arbitral Tribunal under Annex VII of the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea.
3. The Philippines raises four points in the submission. Inter alia, Manila challenges the justification of China's nine dash-line map and the legality of Chinese activities in waters adjacent to the Scarborough Shoal.
4. The loss of effective control of the Scarborough Shoal to China is said to have driven the Philippines to recourse to international arbitration. The tribunal adjourned in late March 2013, and is now considering its jurisdiction over the Philippine submission. The tribunal has yet to arrive at a decision.
5. China repudiated the Philippine submission, so did the ASEAN community. The community's non-committal approach is interpreted as a refusal to meddle in troubled waters.
6. The Philippines has also been locked in a row with Taiwan since 9 May 2013 over a Taiwanese fisherman's death in an area where both laid exclusive economic zone claims. The row has yet to be settled, further exacerbating security concerns of the fishing community in the South China Sea.
7. A regional mechanism to deal with emerging situations on the sea is thus necessary, while resource management issues require urgent and efficacious settlement. Political will, financial capital investment, technology readiness and human resource input are needed for effective conflict management.