Highlights of Developments in ARF Cooperation on Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance

Introduction

1. The work of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief dates back to the establishment of the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Search and Rescue Coordination and Cooperation (ISM on SRCC) in 1996. The aim of the ISM was to initiate cooperation among the Rescue Coordination Centers as well as serve as a network among search and rescue (SAR) personnel in the region.

2. The ARF’s work on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief was then placed under the purview of the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief (ISM on DR) which was convened in 1997 and met annually for four consecutive years. It reconvened in 2005 in the wake of the post-Tsunami disaster in Aceh in 2004. Among the recurrent themes of the ISM include civil-military cooperation in disaster relief, information sharing including utilizing web-based early warnings and contact points, and the establishment of a common procedure to expedite responses to disaster.

A. Highlights from the 1st and 2nd ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Search and Rescue Coordination and Cooperation (ISM on SRCC)

3. 1st ARF ISM on SRCC, Honolulu, 4-7 March 1996
   a. Agreed that active cooperation between training institutions and greater flow of information were necessary, an example of which could be the establishment of a directory of training courses available in the various training institutes.
   b. Suggested that countries who have conducted bilateral or multilateral training to increase joint training in collaboration with experts from other ARF participants for the region.
   c. Proposed that SAR personnel be attached to the Rescue Coordination Centers (RCCs) of other ARF member countries for on-the-job training experience.
   d. Supported the idea of exploring the possibility of establishing a website and a comprehensive communication network among RCCs in the region to work towards possible standardization.
   e. Agreed to publish a directory of regional SAR contact points. The United States offered to compile the directory, with the goal of completing it before the Third ARF Ministerial Meeting.
   f. Acknowledged that greater civilian-military cooperation at the national level was necessary to enhance regional SAR efficiency.

4. 2nd ARF ISM on SRCC, Singapore 26-28 March 1997
   a. Welcomed the proposal of the designation of existing national SAR training institutions as ARF SAR Training Centers (ARF SARTCs). To form the basis of an in-depth consideration by ARF participants of the proposal, a Concept Paper will be circulated by the proponents. Singapore, Australia, and China indicated their willingness in this respect.
   b. Agreed to the proposal to compile a list of ARF SARTCs for submission to the ARF SOM to be recommended to the ARF Ministers for endorsement.
c. Agreed that a matrix of existing bilateral SAR agreements and arrangements be produced with the assistance of the IMO and the ICAO.
d. Noted the importance of bilateral and multilateral agreements and arrangements as frameworks within which SAR agencies operate.
e. Recognized the opportunity for the ARF participants to exchange experiences on media management to learn from each other.
f. Proposals made:
   - 15 Training Awards per year for developing ARF participants in the region for the 9-week SAR Training Course by Singapore.
   - SAR Conference for SAR planners and officials in December 1997 by Singapore.
   - Invitation for observers to Thailand’s annual SAR exercises by Thailand.
   - Offer of two places to ARF participants for Air Directing Officer Course by New Zealand.
   - Re-opening of national SAR courses to participants from 1998 by Australia.

B. Highlights of the 1st – 13th ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief (ISM on DR)

5. 1st ARF ISM on DR, Wellington, 19-20 February 1997
   a. Acknowledged the significant roles of defense authorities in terms of resources, skills, discipline, and assets available to national defense forces.
   b. Agreed on the benefits of comprehensive approach involving national plans of action, effective coordination and clear authority line.
   c. Emphasized the importance of proactive and preventive approaches and the usefulness of exchange of information to mitigate the impact of disasters.
   d. Agreed that international cooperation must be fully sensitive to the needs and approaches of recipient country and that major donors are to respect political boundaries. In addition, activities in the ARF should complement efforts underway in other fora such as the UN.
   e. Proposals made:
      - Train the trainers.
      - Make use of existing international and regional institutions such as the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center in Bangkok (ADPC).
      - Establish expert groups and directory of experts. (Directory now accessible from the ARFNet)
      - Exchange and cooperate to provide early warning.
      - Build common approach to disaster management with standardised procedures.
      - Regional database of national disaster relief assets.

6. 2nd ARF ISM on DR, Bangkok, 18-20 February 1998
   a. Agreed on the importance of civil military coordination and the ASEAN experts group on disaster management.
   b. ARF participants were to identify specific areas of national expertise and national center of excellence to further promote the sharing of expertise.
   c. Stressed the importance of bilateral, sub-regional, and multilateral cooperation on disaster management.
   d. Resolved that any future joint military exercises undertaken by the ARF Participants should include disaster relief activities.
e. Noted the importance of international organizations related to disaster management in developing regional capabilities on this field.

f. Proposal made:
   Workshop on Disaster Management by the ADPC, to be funded by the US.

7. **3rd ARF ISM on DR, Moscow, 11-14 April 1999**
   a. Highlighted the importance of creating public awareness through producing relevant materials and sharing expertise since information support during and after disaster can greatly reduce and prevent sustained damage.
   b. The ADPC presented the Matrices of Cooperation in Disaster Management that covers almost 80 recorded cases of past ad hoc cooperation and existing formal arrangements in disaster management among the ARF participants.
   c. Acknowledged that national and multilateral military capabilities should be engaged in disaster relief operations according to the concrete circumstances and regulations in each country but only upon the request of the country suffering in damage.
   d. The ASEAN Secretariat suggested that ARF could consider the ASEAN Model of Collaboration in the implementation of the Regional Haze Action Plan as a basis for broader cooperation in covering the whole region and particularly among ARF participants.
   e. Proposals made:
      - ARF Track One “Train the Trainers” Seminar with the theme “Towards Common Approaches to Disaster Relief Training” by Thailand. (held on 25-28 January 2000)
      - ARF Conference on Enhancing Capacities of Early Warning Systems by the Philippines.
      - US proposal to fund the compilation of an inventory of existing early warning system and leading expert. That will be undertaken by the ADPC.
      - US proposal to fund a workshop on developing a common format for reporting on post-disaster damage and needs.
      - The European Commission would continue providing funds and assistance through its Humanitarian Office (ECHO) in the form of training and institutional strengthening for disaster preparedness as well as for the implementation of pilot projects for disaster prevention.

8. **4th ARF ISM on DR, Ha Noi, 14-16 May 2000**
   a. Emphasized the importance of inter-agency coordination, especially between the military and civilian agencies in disaster relief.
   b. On the issue of information sharing, it was recognized that putting disaster-related data on the website of individual country is an efficient way. Russia expressed willingness in providing the technology of forecasting and monitoring disaster to the interested ARF participants.
   c. Early warning was considered as a critical component of disaster preparedness and mitigation, and a compilation of a list of early warning capabilities of individual country and information sharing should be carried out soon.
   d. ARF participants were encouraged to provide mutual assistance in the forms of information, expertise, material and equipment among one another.
   e. The updated List of Contact Points for disaster management was circulated at the meeting.
f. Emphasised the need to organize workshops and training courses on specific skills for disaster management.
g. Agreed on the promotion of public awareness in disaster preparedness and mitigation especially in developing countries.
h. Proposals made:
   - Training for Disaster Managers by Thailand.
   - Training Course on Combined Humanitarian Assistance Response by Singapore and US. (held in August 2000).
i. Resolved that future cooperation on disaster relief would focus on the following:
   - Exchange of experience and information sharing, in particular update data on disasters and early warning information.
   - Enhancing individual and regional capacities for disaster preparedness and disaster relief through mutual assistance and networking.
   - Training with emphasis on providing specific skills in disaster management.
   - Promoting greater awareness of the government agencies and the public in disaster preparedness and disaster relief.

9. 5th ARF ISM on DR, Bandung, 30 November – 2 December 2005
   a. Noted Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the United States have volunteered to serve as shepherds to coordinate interim efforts to further the work of the ARF in disaster relief. The Meeting invited other countries to volunteer for this purpose and to convey their interests to the Co-Chairs.
   b. Recognised the need to consider the existing regional arrangements as well as other available frameworks as reference in developing guidelines for the ARF.
   c. Discussed the issue on how the ARF could enhance its cooperation in disaster relief, especially on capacity building of its participants including in training and exercises and updating the ARF contact points and training institutions on disaster relief.
   d. Discussed the possibility of establishing a database of ARF participants’ capacities in disaster relief as well as setting up an ARF virtual task force in disaster response management.
   e. China and Indonesia will work toward drafting an ARF Guidelines on Regional Cooperation on Disaster Relief, taking into account the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response and other available arrangements and frameworks.
   f. Proposals made:
      - Work on an ARF action plan on disaster management and emergency response.

10. 6th ARF ISM on DR, Qingdao, 18-20 September 2006
    a. Noted the recommendation for the ARF countries to strengthen regional disaster preparedness through such measures as (i) ARF Standby Arrangement featuring information sharing on emergency response assets and capacities and the development of common Standard Operation Procedures integrating the UN Operational guidelines and capacities; (ii) holding joint training and exercises, and (iii) developing risk monitoring and early warning capabilities through sharing information, expertise and technologies, as well as contributing and utilization of the UNESCAP Tsunami Regional Trust Fund.
b. Australia introduced its civil and military capabilities and tabled an inventory of assets for disaster relief. The other ARF members were encouraged to table the similar information with the view to compiling an ARF inventory of disaster relief capabilities. Australia also introduced the initiative of an ARF disaster relief desk-top exercise proposed by Australia and Indonesia.

c. Modality of the ARF disaster relief cooperation could be shaped by the following three steps: (i) the formulation of a framework that includes norms, rules, and procedures for disaster relief cooperation; (ii) the establishment of the regional database of disaster relief resources and capacities with Survey Forms of Domestic and Overseas Disaster Relief Resources and Capacities; (iii) the clear identification of cooperation directions by following the framework and database in the fields suggested by the ARF Statement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response.

d. Recognised the urgency of starting the ARF regional cooperation on disaster relief, and agreed that the ARF participants could identify some priority areas for cooperation, such as civil-military coordination, and the modality of cooperation should complement rather than duplicate the existing regional arrangements.

e. Indonesia introduced the concept of ARF Standby Arrangement and Rapid Response System, with the goal of ensuring prompt response in times of emergency and a smooth and seamless deployment of relief efforts.

f. Emphasised the necessity of the coordinated time frame of deployment, and underscored the importance of updating the ARF Disaster Relief focal points listed on the ARF website. A clear mandate, exit strategy, a clear work map, enlisting the help of other organizations, and a transparent system were also highlighted to be important in enhancing disaster response.

11. 7th ARF ISM on DR, Helsinki, 11-12 October 2007
a. Discussed the ARF Standard Operating Procedures for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (SOPs). The SOPs were intended to be a “living document”, to be regularly reviewed and updated.

b. Discussed the development of the ARF Standby Arrangements underlining that the intention was to create complementarity with similar international exercises and regional initiatives.

c. Proposals made:
- Focus more on training and capacity building, in particular to make more use of the ADPC based in Thailand and regional centres of excellence as well as to promote cooperation amongst centres of excellence in the ARF participating countries.

12. 8th ARF ISM on DR, Banda Aceh, 5-6 December 2008
a. The United States introduced the concept of ARF Military and Civil Defense Assets (MCDA) Status Template. The United States underlined that the pre-negotiated, widespread template would significantly speed up the negotiation period, provide quicker access, and allow for easier legal, interagency processes between the host nation and assisting nations. It was also stressed that the MCDA Template should be voluntary (non-binding), flexible, applicable only to temporary HA/DR operations and multilaterally negotiated, bilaterally activated.

b. Discussed the progress of the development of the ARF Strategic Guidance for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief. In case there are still suggestions to revise the text, Indonesia and Australia should lead the process to get the
consensus of ARF participants on the text until a certain date, before moving to the validation process.

c. Discussed the initial draft ARF Work Plan for Disaster Relief. The draft was prepared by an ARF Unit consultant. The consultant pointed out that for the disaster relief Work Plan, the concept paper would be submitted for the endorsement of the 16th ARF Ministerial Meeting while the core areas and projects could be continuously renewed and updated as needed by the ARF Officials.

d. Reviewed the preparation for the ARF Voluntary Demonstration of Response to be conducted in the Central Luzon on 4-9 May 2009.

13. 9th ARF ISM on DR, Honolulu, 16-18 September 2009
   a. Exchanged views on and underscored the importance of civil-military coordination issues, which can be better understood in the context of exercises. The ROK suggested the Meeting to extend invitations to UN humanitarian agencies and NGOs as well as promoting coordination with UNOCHA for the next ARF disaster relief exercise.
   b. Singapore and Australia briefed the Meeting on the ARF Disaster Relief Mapping Service Initiative which was endorsed by the Ministers at the 16th ARF. The Initiative was a voluntary geospatial data-sharing and data mapping service which seeks to bring together available geospatial data required to expedite planning and delivery of aid. The Initiative will rely on information provided voluntarily by the line agencies involved such as Mapping Units. Australia informed the Meeting that the website for the Initiative will be set up with links to the ARF website. Australia circulated a contact details form in order to obtain geospatial contacts from ARF participants to facilitate their input.
   c. Discussed the progress of the implementation of the ARF Work Plan for Disaster Relief and encouraged ARF members to submit project ideas and serve as Lead Countries. Australia and the United States agreed to lead in Priority Area One and Two respectively. ASEAN lead countries for the ARF DR Work Plan are to be determined in October 2009.
   d. Discussed ideas regarding the basic structure, roles, and responsibilities of the next ARF disaster relief exercise hosted by Indonesia and co-chaired by Japan in North Sulawesi in 2011.
   e. Reviewed of the draft ARF MCDA in Disaster Relief. The Meeting noted that further discussions on the Model Arrangement are needed for 2009-2010 in order to finalize the text by the 17th ARF.
   f. Recognised the growing need to ensure complementarity of their disaster relief capacity-building efforts. The Meeting recommended that a review be conducted of various regional mechanisms to determine consistencies and inconsistencies, with the possibility of EU support. The Meeting noted that a study, possibly funded by the EU, could identify areas where ARF and other regional institutions can further complement each other.

14. 10th ARF ISM on DR, Bangkok, 2-3 September 2010
   a. Took note of the call for closer coordination of the ASEAN and ARF efforts on disaster management and for ASEAN Dialogue Partners to support the implementation of the AADMER Work Programme and the development of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre).
b. Indonesia briefed the Meeting on preparations for the ARF Disaster Relief Exercise (ARF DiREx) to be organised with Japan in March 2011 in Manado, North Sulawesi. Some participants were of the view that there should be increased interaction and coordination between the ARF DiREx and the ASEAN Disaster Relief Exercise (ARDEX), including non-ASEAN observership in the ARDEX.

c. Took note of some of the ideas for enhancing coordination and synergy between ASEAN, the ARF and other regional organisations/fora as outlined in the information paper Towards Enhanced Coordination and Synergies for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific.

d. Japan briefed the Meeting on the concept of ARF registration scheme for disaster relief resources and capabilities. Such a registration scheme would be based on the principles of flexibility, voluntarism and complementarity with ASEAN and the UN efforts. Participants discussed the types of information required for the registration, possible links with ASEAN and the UN standby arrangements, the appropriate level of commitment for the registered resources, and registration of physical capabilities not only physical assets.

e. Reviewed the implementation of the ARF DR Work Plan, particularly the objectives, the organisational structure and priority areas. There is a general convergence of views to consider adjusting the Work Plan so that the ARF priority areas would be more focused and align more closely with the AADMER Work Programme. Such adjustments could be undertaken by the ARF Unit and the ASEAN Secretariat personnel responsible for the AADMER.

f. The following recommendations were offered:

- Develop synergies, share lessons learnt, and ultimately institutionalise coordination between ARDEX and the ARF Disaster Relief Exercise (ARF DiREx).
- Utilise as appropriate the existing work of ARF on civilian-military coordination, especially the draft MCDA, to help take forward discussions within ASEAN on Chapter 6 of SASOP dealing with civilian-military coordination, and testing of such a Model Arrangement in the ARF DiREx or another appropriate venue over the near term.
- Examine possibilities of developing synchronised SOPs of ASEAN and the ARF as well as develop appropriate interface between the AADMER Work Programme and the ARF DR Work Plan, including possible synchronisation of the two work plans.
- Examine possibilities of developing appropriate interface between the ARF DR Work Plan, particularly priority area 1, and the Action Plan on Implementation of the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Risk Reduction in Asia adopted at the Third Asian Ministerial Conference on DRR on 4 December 2008 in Kuala Lumpur.
- Develop appropriate modalities whereby the ARF could provide updated information on HADR-related activities and programmes into information platforms such as the UN ESCAP’s Asia-Pacific Gateway on Disaster Risk Reduction and Development and the UNISDR database.
- Promote interoperability among ARF bodies by getting the co-chairs of the ARF ISM on DR to update the outcome of the meeting with other ISMs such as the ARF ISM on Maritime Security.

15. 11th ARF ISM on DR, Brisbane, 16-17 April 2012

a. Recalled the latest policy direction from the ASEAN Leaders at the 19th ASEAN Summit in November 2011 which confirmed that the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster
Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) is to serve as the main regional policy backbone and coordinating platform in ASEAN. In this regard, other sectors and mechanisms in ASEAN should synchronise their policies using AADMER as the common platform to ensure ASEAN centrality.

b. Took note of the briefing by the United States on the proposal to establish an ARF Rapid Disaster Response Agreement (RDR) which is an evolution of the ARF MCDA in Disaster Relief. The aim of the RDR is to be a set of pre-negotiated and concluded bilateral agreements between potential affected and assisting states and to be used only in the event of an extreme natural disaster. The Meeting viewed that the RDR is a good initiative to be considered further in the future.

c. Viewed that the continuity of the ARF DiREx is crucial and therefore a roadmap to set the way forward for the Exercise should be considered. Mindful of the scale of the ARF DiREx 2011 in Manado, the Meeting agreed that the ARF could organise smaller scale and tailor-made exercises which focus on particular elements of disaster response, e.g. search and rescue, emergency logistics, etc. every year and conduct the large scale Exercise over a longer time frame.

d. Discussed the possibility of linking the ARF DiREx with the annual ASEAN Regional Disaster Emergency Relief Exercise (ARDEX) as well as combining exercises under different frameworks such as the ADMM-Plus. The Meeting also agreed to the suggestion that the next ARF DiREx should include the nexus of civil-military coordination.

e. Recognised the certain degree of overlap between the numerous regional initiatives in the area of disaster relief, including the AADMER Work Programme, ADMM-Plus Experts’ Working Group on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (ADMM-Plus EWG on HADR), and the EAS disaster response initiative. The Meeting reaffirmed that each regional grouping has its own uniqueness and advantages, and therefore the ARF should continue exploring complementarities among these groupings.

f. Reviewed the ARF Work Plan on Disaster Relief which was due for an update. The Meeting agreed on the following suggestions to guide the development of the updated Work Plan:

- Simplify and narrow down the current priority areas and type of activities.
- Consider the time frame for the activities since the implementation of the Work Plan only covers a period of 2 years.
- Build on priority areas in line with the AADMER Work Programme and the Hanoi Plan of Action to Implement of the ARF Vision Statement.
- Include only activities with Lead Countries in the draft revised Work Plan to be submitted to the ARF SOM to avoid too many activities that are less likely to be implemented in the next two years.
- Establish guidelines for the ARF participants to address the bottleneck in coordination during disaster relief operations.
- Identify ways to synergise cooperation between the ARF and other regional groupings such as the ADMM-Plus and the EAS.
- Identify Lead Countries for the agreed priority areas of the Work Plan. Lead Countries of the AADMER Work Programme could lead in the similar priority areas of the ARF Work Plan.
- Involve the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) in the finalisation of the Work Plan to synchronise the ARF Work Plan and the AADMER Work Programme.
g. Discussed the recommendation to convene regular consultations between the ARF and the ACDM, and agreed that the next ARF ISM on DR should invite the ACDM Chair.

16. 12th ARF ISM on DR, Padang, 12-13 March 2013
a. Focused on coordination and synergy between regional HADR mechanisms, and as such took note of briefings from representatives of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM), the ADMM-Plus Experts’ Working Group on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (EWG on HADR), the East Asia Summit, the ASEAN Secretariat, and the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA).

b. The briefing by ASEAN Secretariat took stock of existing HADR mechanisms in ASEAN and offered relevant suggestions to synergise, complement and streamline the activities among these mechanisms, including:
- Conducting dialogues among ASEAN internal mechanisms to accelerate efforts for an integrated ASEAN HADR.
- Conducting reviews on how other mechanisms can best complement ASEAN’s own arrangements and bring comparative advantages or added values.
- Cross-reporting between the various existing mechanisms, back-to-back timing of relevant events particularly when similar topics are discussed.
- Scheduling similar events with longer intervals.
- Building on existing/planned activities under the AADMER Work Programme while expanding the involvement of non-ASEAN Member States under the ARF, the EAS or the ADMM-Plus.
- Finding interface/collaboration points between the ARF, the EAS, and the ADMM-Plus.
- Rationalising the number of exercises particularly large-scale field exercises.

b. Noted the ASEAN Secretariat’s plan to come up with a paper on promoting synergy among the mechanisms, including rationalisation of exercises, for consideration by the relevant ASEAN bodies. Some participants offered suggestions for the synergy, such as holding the ARF DiREx every three years with table top exercises from other mechanisms supporting the theme of the DiREx or utilising the after action report to focus and reduce the scope of the exercises.

d. Exchanged views on the need to address the emotional impact of disasters to the survivors, the scope of insurance coverage to natural disasters, and the provision and coordination of consular services for foreign nationals in times of disasters.

e. Reviewed the implementation of the ARF Work Plan on Disaster Relief 2012-2014 and welcomed Australia as lead country of Priority Area 1, Singapore as lead country of Priority Area 2, and Malaysia and United States as lead countries of Priority Area 3. Took note of several proposals for activities to be conducted under Priority Areas 1 and 3.

f. Emphasised that the Work Plan is a living document which could be updated to reflect changes and updates as necessary.

g. Noted the offer from China and Japan to take up the co-chairmanship of the ISM on DR for the next cycle.

13th ARF ISM on DR, Chengdu, 26-28 February 2014
a. Discussed a wide range of issues pertaining to HADR cooperation in the ARF, including risk assessment, monitoring and early warning, civil-military coordination, humanitarian assistance stockpiles, emergency response and management, and
damage assessment and reconstruction. Many of the presentations focused on the use of science and technology particularly in enhancing early warning for affected populations, increasing the response times of disaster relief personnel, and developing more resilient disaster shelters.

b. Exchanged views on the lessons learned from disaster response, relief, recovery, and reconstruction efforts, particularly in the aftermath of the Sichuan earthquake in China in 2008 and Typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda in the Philippines in 2013. The scale of destruction in these cases underscored the importance of, among others, developing robust early warning systems, strengthening multi-sectoral response particularly between military and civilian agencies, and strengthening community management in order to increase the resilience and preparedness of affected populations.

c. Continued the focus on coordination and synergy between regional HADR mechanisms and took note of briefings by UNOCHA, the ADMM-Plus EWG on HADR, the East Asia Summit, and the ASEAN Secretariat. The Meeting noted the suggestion for the ARF to conduct only one annual large-scale field exercise with other exercises in complementary; another suggestion was to place specific themes to the exercises with the ARF focusing on civil-military cooperation and coordination and the ADMM-Plus focusing on testing and improving the rapid disaster response capabilities of the military.

d. The briefing by the ASEAN Secretariat highlighted new developments in ASEAN related to synergy and coordination, namely the adoption by the ASEAN Leaders of the ASEAN Declaration on Enhancing Cooperation in Disaster Management, the convening of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management (AMMDM), and the creation of a Joint Task Force promote synergy and coordination among ASEAN-related HADR mechanisms as well as the development of terms of reference to formalise the role of the ASEAN Secretary-General as the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Coordinator.

e. Malaysia and China briefed the Meeting on the preparations for the ARF Disaster Relief Exercise (ARF DiREx) 2015 which is scheduled to be conducted in Malaysia on 1-6 February 2015. The ARF DiREx 2015 will continue to test civil-military coordination efforts and create synergy towards the effective implementation of AADMER as the common platform for regional disaster management. The Co-Chairs highlighted several challenges which will be addressed in the ARF DiREx 2015, such as:
  - Strengthening the effective utilization and quick deployment of the ASEAN Emergency Rapid Assessment Team (ERAT);
  - The effective operationalisation of the AHA Centre to enhance regional cooperation and ensure ASEAN’s collective response;
  - Management of mass casualties in the immediate aftermath of a disaster;
  - Management of international humanitarian aid;
  - Addressing special needs of the population including setting up special medical facilities;
  - Management of consular assistance to foreigners as well as coordination and information-sharing between foreign embassies in the affected country;
  - Media management and control of information outflow; and
  - Coordination of local and international volunteers with HADR authorities.

C. Highlights of Other ARF Meetings and Activities on Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance
17. **ARF Workshop on Civil Military Operation, Makati City, 12-13 September 2005**  
Agreed on the following recommendations, among others:  

a. Create and maintain updated, shared database of assets and capabilities of the ARF participants available and ready for deployment for international humanitarian aid.  
b. Summarized Matrix of Past and Current Efforts, i.e. Database of Experts and Capabilities (e.g., Australian list), updating, monitoring and follow through of agreements reached and proposals made.  
c. Gather comprehensive documentation of specific disasters including best practices, national plans, photographs and other relevant information.  
d. Institute a Community of Practice (CoP) and Knowledge Management System (KMS).  
e. Standardise operating principles/procedures for use of both civilian and military disaster relief workers and materials within ARF participants i.e. visa, diplomatic clearance, landing permits.  
f. Recognise the importance of the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Centre, the ASEAN Disaster Information Sharing and Communication Network, and regional instrument on disaster management and emergency response and recommend strengthening their potential in capacity building and coordinating regional disaster relief and rehabilitation efforts that affect ASEAN and its ARF partners. For example in the coordination and allocation of relief resources and efforts.  
g. Establish an ARF regional standby arrangements and strengthen current arrangements for disaster relief and emergency response.  
h. ARF participants could establish a registration procedure for incoming NGOs to minimize confusion, duplication, etc.  
i. ARF participants should develop a list of NGOs, their capabilities, including funding arrangements, sustainability. Each country should gather relevant NGO information and maintain it within its emergency management agency.  
j. Interpret the UN guidelines at a regional level for compatibility with the ARF participants’ specific disaster needs and contributing nations’ response, including the UN Oslo Guidelines for the use of military and civil defense assets in natural disaster response and United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC).  
k. Institutionalise education, training and combined and joint exercises in CMO and in disaster relief operations, i.e. planning exercises, command exercises.  
l. ARF participants should consider conducting a desktop disaster relief exercise, and possibly a field exercise in due course.  
m. Establish exchange/attachment program between ARF participants emergency management agencies, to exchange views, establish relationships and understanding of respective countries’ procedures.  
n. Consider the contribution to a common fund for regional disaster relief. i.e. for early warning system.  
o. Establish legal arrangements (MOUs and SOFAs) to facilitate international assistance.  
p. That the ARF Intersessional Meeting (ISM) on Disaster Relief invites volunteer countries to coordinate the implementation of these recommendations.  

18. **14th ASEAN Regional Forum, Manila, 2 August 2007**
The Meeting adopted the ARF General Guidelines for Disaster Relief Cooperation, which aims to establish a basic framework for disaster relief cooperation among ARF participants, promote more effective cooperation, and reduce losses due to frequent disasters.

19. ARF Table Top Exercise on Disaster Relief, Jakarta, 1-2 May 2008
Agreed on the following recommendations, among others:
   a. A closer collaboration between the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) and the ARF.
   b. The possibility of establishing an ARF coordinating center to collate best practices and lessons learned and facilitate information sharing among ARF members and to align the Guidance with internationally recognized standards and guidelines.
   c. To establish a technical working group to maintain the ongoing development of the ARF SOP with the ARF Shepherd countries to assume the role of this working group.

20. ARF Workshop on Stabilization and Reconstruction, Bangkok, 10-12 September 2008
Agreed on the following best practices and lessons learned, among others:
   a. Assisting operations must be conducted with the consent of, in coordination with, and in accordance with the priorities of the host government.
   b. Education of the assisting forces, effective national and local communication, and cultural sensitivity contribute to healthy relationships between the various parties.
   c. Coordination among donors, including the growing role of regional organizations, can facilitate the effective use of donor experience and expertise.
   d. Both the affected country and assisting parties should understand the entry and exit strategy of operations.
   e. Stabilisation and reconstruction operations are a comprehensive, whole-of-government, and long-term endeavor.
   f. Operations should utilise all the tools of government, as appropriate, such as diplomacy, development, and defence as well as national NGOs and private donations and volunteers.
   g. Military resources should be called upon at the request of civilian authorities and in accordance with the considerations of the host government.
   h. Multiple funding streams from interagency donors can bring appropriate and tailored funds to operations and provide flexible mechanisms for assistance.
   i. Assisting parties should consider the following requirements during all phases of stabilisation and reconstruction operations, especially during the planning, execution, and conclusion stages:
      - Formulate a clear and long-term strategic objective for operations that accurately reflects the political commitment of assisting parties while bearing in mind the importance of having an appropriate exit strategy.
      - Maintain security as a priority that facilitates reconstruction efforts. Police readiness plays a crucial, and often underestimated, role in security.
      - Clarify the timelines for the mission, assistance, and withdrawal, and match those timelines with the initial and ongoing time-phased assessments.
      - Remain cognizant of the logistical, governance, and development impediments to operations.
      - Quickly acquire an assessment of the needs of the host country.
   j. Some differences between stabilisation and reconstruction operations, such as in states at risk, and traditional disaster relief and peacekeeping operations exist.
These can include legal authorities, provision for security and other governance functions, the lack of permissive environments and coordination challenges within assisting governments.

21. ARF Seminar on Laws and Regulation on the Participation in International Disaster Relief by Armed Forces, Beijing, 22-25 April 2009
Agreed on the following recommendations, among others:
   a. Acknowledged that militaries should only be used as the last resort, and not play a long-term sustained role in HADR reconstruction. This was a role that is best left to the civil agencies.
   b. Called for the discussions on the ARF Strategic Guidance for HADR to be concluded quickly for adoption as this was an important mechanism that would assist ARF participants in HADR cooperation.
   c. There was a need to establish emergency response standby arrangements to facilitate disaster relief efforts. The seminar further noted the necessity for the ARF to intensify its cooperation and to move beyond dialogue and to build practical cooperation.
   d. The United States briefed the seminar on the concept paper and draft text, proposing for an MCDA.

22. 2nd ARF Seminar on Laws and Regulation on the Participation in International Disaster Relief by Armed Forces, Beijing, 30-31 August 2010
Agreed on the following recommendations, among others:
   a. Laws and regulations on HADR by armed forces should touch upon six aspects: legal norms of conduct on the subject, activity, procedure, legal liability, coordination issues, and the safety and security of the troops involved in HADR operations. Development of the legal system should be focused on three aspects: 1) providing the basis for the armed forces to fulfill diversified military missions which cover HADR operations; 2) stipulating the types of non-war operations; and 3) awarding special medals to the military personnel who participated in UN peacekeeping operations and humanitarian assistance.
   b. ARF participants should formulate their laws and regulations with consideration of the regional guidelines on disaster management, e.g. the ARF Strategic Guidance for HADR, AADMER, and SASOP.
   c. International and regional meetings on this topic should be regularly arranged, with discussions on systematic and dynamic legal subjects and the inclusion of table-top exercises or decision-making games. In the future, the ARF participants can improve and complete the ARF Strategic Guidance for HADR in regards to civil-military cooperation with the aim of strengthening national and regional disaster response capabilities among the ARF participants, as well as improving the speed and effectiveness of ARF multinational disaster relief responses.

23. ARF Disaster Relief Exercise (ARF DiREx 2011), Manado, 15-19 March 2011
   a. The ARF DiREx 2011 was successfully conducted with the participation of 4,334 civilian and military personnel as well as ships, boats, helicopters, and transport aircraft from nearly all ARF participants and several international organisations. The Exercise consisted of a Table Top Exercise (TTX), Field Training Exercise (FTX) and Humanitarian Civic Action (HCA). The FTX was comprised of Urban Search and Rescue (USAR), Land Operations, Maritime Operations, Air Operations, and
Medical Operations, while HCA consisted of Medical Civic Action Programme (MEDCAP) and Engineering Civic Action Programme (ENCAP).

b. The After-Action Review of the ARF DiREx 2011 offered the following recommendations:
   - Conduct similar joint field exercises on a regular basis with an interval of two years, while convening table top exercises and other relevant activities in between;
   - Utilise role-play methods in dealing with specific cases with a well-defined scale and scope, with respect to the possibility of conducting a Command Post Exercise (CPX);
   - Ensure that similar exercises from other existing regional mechanisms are not duplicating each other, in fact should be mutually complementary and reinforcing each other;
   - Include an attainable exercise component with a more integrated scenario, possibly one that explores cross border scenarios, to help build on the achievements of the ARF DiREx 2011; and
   - Produce guidelines, standard operational procedures, and regulations regarding coordination mechanism and field action.

24. 3rd ARF Seminar on Laws and Regulation on the Participation in International Disaster Relief by Armed Forces, Beijing, 11-12 June 2012
   a. Underscored the importance of removing all legal obstacles in international HADR operations in order to expedite deployment of relief assistance.
   b. The United States introduced the RDR Agreement which is an evolution of the ARF MCDA in Disaster Relief. The purpose of the RDR is to facilitate the pulling instead of the pushing of assistance into a disaster-affected country. The RDR is a model agreement whose details could be adjusted between the assisting and affected countries.
   c. Discussed the rights and obligations of the armed forces of both assisting and affected countries during international HADR operations.
   d. Discussed the issue and challenges of privileges and immunities of armed forces participating in international HADR operations, such as the eligibility and types of privileges and immunities accorded to armed forces in international HADR operation and the need to strike a balance between delivering swift disaster relief and satisfying the requirements of the national law of the affected country, particularly when national security is under concern.
   e. Noted the briefing by Indonesia on the development of the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Utilization of Military Assets for HADR under the Framework of AADMER. The SOP will be submitted as part of the ASEAN SASOP under Chapter VI on Facilitation and Utilisation of Military Assets and Capacities.

25. ARF Disaster Relief Exercise (ARF DiREx 2013), Cha-am, 7-11 May 2013
   a. The ARF DiREx 2013 was successfully conducted with the participation of 1,600+ civilian and military personnel as well as ships, boats, helicopters, and transport aircraft from 23 ARF participants and several international organisations. The Exercise consisted of a Table Top Exercise (TTX), Field Training Exercise (FTX) and After Action Review (AAR). The FTX was comprised of Search and Rescue (SAR), Land Operations, Maritime Operations, Air Operations, and Medical Assistance.
b. The After-Action Review of the ARF DiREx 2013 offered the following highlights and recommendations:

- The ARF DiREx 2013 successfully served as a platform for civil and military actors to work together on the specific tasks within the Exercise’s scope which consolidated national, regional and international security;
- Future exercises could further explore realistic scenarios that comprise role-playing and unexpected events;
- Closer alignment between the FTX and the TTX with possible chronological scenarios that require FTX and TTX to address certain issues concurrently within the overall exercise;
- Further consideration of consular elements to be included in the Exercise, including through the development of regional guidelines for the provision of assistance to foreign nationals during disasters, the identification of roles and responsibilities of foreign missions, and information sharing between foreign missions;
- Improve coordination on the timing of existing exercise programs by different fora in the region; and
- Future exercises should emphasise information-sharing among civil-military partners.

D. ARF Statements on Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance

26. At the 13th ARF in Kuala Lumpur on 28 July 2006, the Ministers adopted the ARF Statement on Disaster Relief and Emergency Response. The Statement called for, among others, the development of an ARF general guidelines on disaster management and emergency response for the use of both civilian and military personnel within the ARF participating countries. To expedite cooperation towards the implementation of the Statement, six ARF participants, namely Australia, China, the European Union, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the United States, volunteered as shepherd countries for ARF disaster relief cooperation.

E. Outstanding Issues

27. At the 6th ARF ISM on DR in 2006, China distributed the Survey Forms of Domestic and Overseas Disaster Relief Resources and Capacities to all ARF participants. To date, a total of fourteen countries have submitted the completed survey forms to China. The development of a database based on the information contained in the completed survey forms is continuing.

28. During the discussion at the 15th ARF Retreat, the Ministers also tasked the ARF Unit to compile the views and experiences of ARF participants in disaster management and humanitarian assistance for further deliberation at the 8th ARF ISM on Disaster Relief in Banda Aceh in December 2008 and for submission to the 16th ARF in Bangkok in 2009. This could include views on issues such as a single integrated operation procedure, early warning systems and networks, establishment of food banks, coordination with international organizations and NGOs, a registry of an ARF standby force, civil-military coordination, search and rescue teams, and other national set-ups and relevant experiences. ARF Unit has circulated an ARF Disaster Relief Shared Experience Form to be filled-up by the ARF participants concerning their experiences in disaster
management. To date, Australia, Czech Republic, Denmark and Pakistan have submitted their completed forms to the ARF Unit.

F. Latest Developments

29. Australia and Indonesia prepared the ARF Strategic Guidance for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief based on the outcomes of the ARF Table Top Exercise on Disaster Relief in Jakarta on 1-2 May 2008. The ARF Strategic Guidance for Humanitarian Assistance provides high level strategic and operational guidelines for multinational cooperation in disaster relief rather than tactical standard operating procedures. At the 17th ARF in Ha Noi on 23 July 2010 the Ministers took note of the Strategic Guidance. The Ministers were of the view that the ARF Strategic Guidance would be a non-binding and living document that can be reviewed and amended, as required, by the future ISM on Disaster Relief.

30. To facilitate the bilateral legal arrangements in the use of defense and military assets in disaster relief operation, the ARF MCDA in Disaster Relief has been developed. At the 17th ARF the Ministers viewed that the Model Arrangement was a reference non-binding model to be utilized for bilateral arrangements between the ARF participants on a voluntary basis. In this regard, the Ministers took note of the Model Arrangement.

31. A practical tool termed the ARF Disaster Relief Mapping Service (ARF-DRMS) Initiative was developed by Australia and Singapore. The Mapping Service contains geospatial data which will be voluntarily contributed by ARF participants and readily available in the event of emergency. The Mapping Service became operational on July 2010 and can be accessed through the Links section of the ARFNet. The 12th ARF ISM on DR in Brisbane reaffirmed the availability of the ARF DRMS and encouraged ARF participants to take advantage of the service.

32. At the 15th ARF in Singapore in 2008, the Ministers tasked the Co-Chairs of the ARF ISM on Disaster Relief to work with ARF participants to draw up an ARF Disaster Relief Work Plan aimed at coordinating ARF-wide or sub-regional training for disaster preparedness. The Work Plan was targeted for implementation period of 2009-2011. For the implementation of the Work Plan, ARF participants are encouraged to volunteer as lead countries for the three priority areas for immediate implementation (tier 1) namely 1) Disaster Risk and Vulnerability Identification, Reduction and Prevention in Selected ARF Sub-Region(s); 2) Improving Government Emergency Response, Relief and Early Recovery; and 3) Capacity Identification and Improving Coordination of Capacity-Building Efforts in Asia. The Work Plan was reviewed by the 11th ARF ISM on Disaster Relief in Brisbane in 2012. An updated Implementation Annex of the Work Plan for implementation period of 2012-2014 was prepared by Indonesia and Australia as the Co-Chairs of the ISM on Disaster Relief with the assistance of the ASEAN Secretariat. The new Work Plan was adopted by the Ministers at the 19th ARF in Phnom Penh on 12 July 2012 and consists of three new priority areas, namely 1) Promote Networking and Information Sharing to Enhance the Capacity of ARF Participants Particularly in the Areas of Risk Assessment, Monitoring and Early Warning; 2) Promote International Cooperation and Assistance in HADR Operations; and 3) Promote Interoperability and Coordination in HADR Operations.
33. The 21st ARF which was held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar on 10 August 2014 reiterated the importance of creating synergies for the effective implementation of AADMER as the common platform for disaster management in ASEAN. To this end, the Ministers welcomed discussions on increasing practical cooperation and promoting more integrated coordination and synergies in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) among ASEAN-related mechanisms in particular the ADMM/ADMM-Plus, the ARF, the EAS, and the newly-convened ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management (AMMDM).

34. The 21st ARF also welcomed the ARF DiREx 2015 which will be conducted in Malaysia from 1 to 6 February 2015. As part of the preparations for the Exercise, the Initial Planning Conference will be convened on 9-11 September 2014 followed by the Final Planning Conference which will be convened on 4-6 November 2014.

35. Myanmar, China and Japan will be co-chairing the next cycle of the ISM on Disaster Relief. The 13th ARF ISM on DR was convened in Chengdu, China, on 26-28 February 2014.

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