

**The ASEAN Regional Forum Statement
on Strengthening Coordination and Cooperation
on Maritime Search and Rescue**

The chairman of ASEAN Regional Forum, on behalf of its participants, issued the following statement:

Expressing sympathies to the families of those on the missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 in March 2014 and the victims on the South Korean passenger liner Sewol in April 2014, and extending appreciation for the search and rescue (SAR) efforts by the participating nations in the above-mentioned incidents,

Realizing that accidents at sea and in the air pose a growing threat to regional security,

Recalling the efforts ARF has made in promoting maritime SAR coordination and cooperation among its participants,

Recognizing the importance of the provisions on international maritime SAR in *the Convention on International Civil Aviation, the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)* and other international instruments,

Realizing that the effectiveness and efficiency of regional SAR capacity and cooperation needs to be further enhanced,

Calling for regional countries to further strengthen SAR coordination and cooperation at bilateral and multilateral levels, including through dialogue and cooperation in ARF,

ARF participants reiterate their commitment to the following principles, among others, in regional coordination and

cooperation on maritime SAR:

- Saving lives should be the top priority,

- Maritime distress personnel should be treated equally, regardless of nationality of vessels and personnel,

- Maritime SAR for saving lives should be free of charge,

- Provisions of international law and the laws and regulations of relevant countries should be complied with, and national sovereignty and territorial integrity of relevant countries should be respected,

- Maritime SAR cooperation should be helpful to enhancing capacity building of regional countries, promoting confidence building process, and fostering a regional disaster relief cooperation system,

ARF participants will endeavor to take the following measures to strengthen regional cooperation on Maritime SAR:

- Encourage active participation in SAR operations for major maritime and air accidents in the region and the provision of all possible facilitation for such operations,

- Work together to promote SAR capacity building of all participants, strengthen exchanges and cooperation in professional training and dissemination of advanced modalities, technologies and equipment,

- Convene regular workshops and consultations on SAR cooperation, conduct regional table-top and field training SAR exercises,

- Strengthen communication and coordination between national maritime SAR centers, take actions to establish a

network of SAR centers for information sharing and exchange, and set up hotlines for maritime emergency assistance, with the aim of expanding the sharing of information and experience on maritime security, maritime SAR, and addressing maritime disasters and accidents,

-Encourage military and civilian SAR coordination and cooperation on information sharing and SAR operations, both at national and regional level,

-Based on provisions in *the Convention on International Civil Aviation, the International Convention for SOLAS* and other relevant international treaties, explore the possibility of establishing an effective and efficient SAR cooperation and coordination mechanism in the Asia Pacific, including setting up a regional SAR coordination center and SAR bases in ASEAN countries when necessary, with a view to upgrading regional SAR capacity,

-Support the work on the continuous improvement of the working manual and technical standards on maritime SAR by International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and International Maritime Organization (IMO).