

## Annex F

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM:  
INTER-SESSIONAL MEETING  
ON SEARCH AND RESCUE  
COORDINATION AND COOPERATION  
IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION  
4-7 MARCH 1996, HONOLULU, HAWAII

Introduction

1. The ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Meeting on Search and Rescue Coordination and Cooperation (**ARF ISM SAR**) in the Asia Pacific was held on 4-7 March 1996 in **Honolulu**, Hawaii. The meeting was jointly **organised** by the United States of America and the Republic of Singapore as agreed to by the ARF Ministers at the Second ARF Meeting on 1 August 1995 in Bandar Seri **Begawan**, Brunei **Darussalam**. The ARF ISM SAR was jointly chaired by Ambassador **Winston Lord**, the United States Assistant Secretary for East Asia and Pacific **Affairs**, and Mr. **Kishore Mahbubani**, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore.

2. The ARF ISM SAR was aimed at promoting universality; enhancing multilateral SAR coordination **and** cooperation in the Asia Pacific within the ARF context; **building** mutual trust and **confidence**, and promoting transparency among the civilian and **military** agencies of the ARF participants engaged in **SAR**; and enhancing coordination and cooperation in the Asia Pacific under existing operating **procedures**.

3. The agenda of the ARF SAR ISM is attached at Annex A. The programme of activities is attached at Annex B. The list of participants who attended the meeting is at Annex C. A **compilation** of presentations of national SAR arrangements by ARF participants was provided to each delegation.

4. The ARF ISM SAR was attended by 18 ARF participants. Representatives of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) participated as guest speakers. United States Admiral **Joseph Prueher**, **Commander-in-Chief**, U.S. Pacific Command, gave the keynote address to the meeting. For the first time, in addition to officials from the Foreign and Defence Ministries, officials from Aviation, **Communications**, Transportation, **Maritime**, and other civilian Ministries also participated **constructively** in the meeting. This marked another important step forward in realising

ARF as an avenue to strengthen regional cooperation and confidence building.

5. Five discussion topics, two workshops, and a practical search and rescue demonstration were conducted. All delegations presented a brief overview of their respective country's national SAR organisation.

6. The following is a summary of the key points discussed.

Topic 1: International SAR Conventions Publications

7. ICAO and IMO representatives briefed the meeting on the various SAR Conventions and the technical requirements specified in the IMO and ICAO SAR Manuals, as well as recent developments in these areas. Several countries also briefed the meeting on the steps that they were taking to incorporate the various ICAO/IMO SAR requirements into their SAR organisations.

Topic 2: Regional SAR Training Overview

8. Singapore presented the introductory remarks. The discussions on SAR training emphasised the importance of training of personnel involved in SAR to enable them to meet the increased SAR demands which have resulted from increases in air and sea traffic in the Asia-Pacific region. The meeting noted that IMO and ICAO had developed over the years substantial standardisation provisions for SAR procedures and equipment. This will lead to better cooperation as well as facilitate coordination among the ARF participants to effect more efficient responses to SAR requests. There was also agreement that active cooperation between training institutions and greater flow of information was necessary, an example of which could be the establishment of a directory of training courses available in the various training institutes.

9. The Inter-Sessional Meeting took note of the fact that bilateral and multilateral training was already being provided by a number of countries in the region. Several participants suggested that these countries increase joint training in collaboration with experts from other ARF participants for the region. The need to provide different types of training for various levels of SAR personnel was also identified.

10. In addition, the meeting noted the importance of practical training and exercises to hone the skills of SAR personnel to enable them to maintain a high state of readiness. It suggested that after training, SAR personnel be attached to the Rescue Coordination Centres (RCCs) of other ARF member countries for on-the-job training and experience. The need for training of personnel other than SAR Mission Coordinators (SMCs) such as pilots and medical personnel involved in SAR was also noted. Exercises could cover both paper and field exercises and could explore the possibility of establishing an internet website between RCCs to work towards possible standardisation.

### Topic 3: Military and Civilian SAR Coordination and Cooperation

11. Indonesia made the introductory remarks. Several participants noted the increasing involvement of the military in humanitarian activities such as SAR. The meeting noted that close cooperation at the national level between civilian and military agencies would facilitate effective SAR operations. Participants shared the view that, although different countries possess varying forms of formal civilian-military cooperation, greater civilian-military cooperation at the national level was necessary to enhance regional SAR efficiency.

### Topic 4: SAR Communications and Potential for SAR Coordination and Cooperation

12. This topic was introduced by the United States. The meeting noted that with the recent advances in communications technology, responses to distress calls could become more efficient. It would therefore be useful to develop a well-integrated regional system of cooperation on SAR matters. The standardisation of SAR communications manuals, procedures and training at the regional level would be a worthwhile objective. Suggestions were made for subsequent actions by the IMO to discuss a number of issues including the problem of electronically transmitted false alerts. The meeting also supported closer cooperation in establishing a comprehensive SAR communications network among RCCs in the region.

## Topic 5: Benefits of Regional SAR Coordination and Cooperation

13. Australia made the introductory remarks and China gave a presentation on the topic. The meeting 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. In addition, countries without a SAR manual agreed that by drawing on the expertise of other ARF participants, they could develop more quickly a manual suitable for their own countries. ARF countries were encouraged to comply with the provisions of the IMO and ICAO SAR Conventions. Exchanges of SAR manuals among ARF countries would be beneficial.

### Workshop

14. The United States led an informal workshop on the relative importance to the Asia-Pacific region of various aspects of the SAR system. The purpose of this effort was to identify and prioritise vital elements of a SAR system within the region, with a view toward selecting potential areas of regional cooperation. There was a clear consensus that the most important elements of a regional SAR system involved formal SAR organisations, establishment of effective RCCs, and comprehensive training programmes on a national and regional basis.

15. Singapore led the second session which focused on the importance of SAR training. The workshop identified the need to provide training to fully implement the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS), improving cooperation between maritime and aeronautical RCCs and further regional cooperation in SAR training.

### SAR Demonstration

16. The U.S. Coast Guard provided a demonstration of search and rescue techniques using U.S. Coast Guard aircraft and vessels. The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary presented a boating safety display.

## Conclusion

17. The meeting was **successful** and accomplished the objectives laid out. The discussions were constructive and frank. **It was** agreed that a directory of regional SAR contact points be published to facilitate the flow of information and to **encourage** closer cooperation among **ARF participants**. With a view towards eventual development of a comprehensive SAR communications network among RCCs in the **region**, the meeting identified the following areas for **further** discussion and possible future **cooperation**:

- a. The increased sharing of training facilities and expertise in the region to enhance the capabilities of SAR personnel;
- b. Further cooperation between training institutions and the facilitation of greater flow of information, for example, with the **establishment** of a directory of training courses;
- c. Expanded **bilateral** and multilateral training programmes among various **ARF countries** in collaboration with experts from **other ARF participating countries**;
- d. Movement towards **standardisation** of SAR manuals, training and procedures;
- e. Possible increased practical training and exercises such as:
  - i. Attaching SAR **personnel** to the RCCs of other countries for **on-the-job** training and experience;
  - ii. Training of personnel other than **SMCs** such as pilots and medical personnel involved in SAR;
  - iii. Conducting paper and field exercises; and,
  - iv. Exploring the possibility of establishing an internet web site between RCCs.

18. The Inter-Sessional **Meeting**, taking full note of the wide variety of on-going and pre-existing bilateral and multilateral search and rescue agreements, SAR **exchanges**, and SAR **exercises**, strongly encourages ARF participants to continue developing these cooperative SAR ties in the humanitarian interest of saving lives. The meeting also agreed to recommend to the next ARF **SOM**

that a meeting be held in **Singapore** following the Third ARF Ministerial Meeting to further explore cooperation in the above-mentioned areas within the framework of IMO and ICAO. The meeting may be attended by SAR experts and officials who are familiar with the ARF process.

19. The meeting was held in the traditional spirit of ARF cordiality and solidarity. The meeting expressed its appreciation to the United States and Singapore for the warm and generous hospitality accorded to it and the excellent arrangements made for the meeting by the Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies.