

(ARF masthead)

**ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM
Concept Note**

ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Tabletop Exercise (TTX) on Response Capabilities to CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear) Incidents

Proposal

1. The Philippines proposes the conduct of a Tabletop Exercise (TTX) on “*Response Capabilities to CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear) Incidents*” under the auspices of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Subject to the endorsement of ARF member States, the TTX is proposed to be held in 2020.

Co-Chair

2. The Philippines is seeking a non-ASEAN ARF member State/s co-chair the TTX.

Background

3. The ARF Work Plan on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (NPD) highlights the need for the Inter-Sessional Meeting (ISM) on NPD to be “*an avenue for working-level officials to discuss capacity building activities aimed at facilitating ARF Participants’ implementation of their non-proliferation and disarmament obligations*” as State Parties to the existing multilateral instruments, including the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004).
4. Among the ARF ISM on NPD goals is “*preventing the illicit trafficking, in all aspects, of weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery, and related materials in accordance with the national laws of ARF Participants.*”
5. The ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint 2025 provides for efforts to enhance regional capacities to respond to CBRN incidents, in particular the following action lines:

B.5.4 Promote disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, while enhancing ASEAN capacity to address deliberate/accidental release of hazardous substances/agents of weapons of mass destruction

- i. Promote cooperation to maintain Southeast Asia as a region free of WMD and CBRNE threats;*

- ii. Enhance capacity to address deliberate/accidental release of high risk CBRN material, in collaboration with relevant international organizations and external parties.*
- 6. With respect to the ARF, the Blueprint specifies the following action lines under Objective B of a *“Peaceful, Secure and Stable Region”*.

B.1.3 Strengthen the ASEAN Regional Forum process in support of the ASEAN Community

- i. Enhance the ARF as an action-oriented mechanism that develops concrete and effective responses to the common challenges confronting the Asia-Pacific region*
- 7. The Chair’s Statement of the 18th ARF held in Bali, Indonesia on 23 July 2011 recognized the inclusion of CBRN aspects in the ARF Work Plan on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC). CBRN was also identified as a priority area by the 2015-2017 Work Plan of the ARF ISM on CTTC, with the Philippines and the United States identified as lead countries.
- 8. The Hanoi Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN Regional Forum Vision Statement of 2010 in the areas of Counter Terrorism – Transnational Crime highlights the need for capacity-building (under 2.5, *Support the development of national strategies and legal frameworks in the field of counterterrorism and transnational crime*), cooperation and information exchange (under 4.10, *Exchange experience and promote the development of relevant best practices*).
- 9. Coordination on the development of the CBRN National Action Plans in ASEAN is being done within the framework of the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence (COE) for Risk Mitigation. This COE was established within the framework of the Bandar Seri Begawan Plan of Action to Strengthen the ASEAN-EU Enhanced Partnership (2013-2015).

Objectives

- 10. Build on previous ARF events, such as the ARF Bio-Preparedness Table-top Exercise and Workshop (11-13 August 2015), and the ARF Workshops on “Raising Awareness and Promoting Cooperation on CBRN Risk Mitigation” held on 08-10 September 2015 (co-chaired by the Philippines and the EU) and 06-08 March 2018 (co-chaired by the Philippines, United States and Canada).
- 11. Enhance the inter-operability and coordination among concerned government agencies and the international community on how to deal with CBRN incidents.
- 12. Translate previous awareness-raising sessions into enhancement of best practices, opportunities and gaps in the region’s response capabilities, test

national and regional action/response plans with a view towards constant improvement and updating.

13. Develop recommendations on how to improve regional response mechanisms in the event of CBRN incidents.
14. Identify priority actions to strengthen national capabilities in CBRN risk mitigation and response.

Challenges

15. CBRN incident response requires a well-coordinated approach that maximizes the resources and capacities of all relevant ministries and agencies in a national setting, placing particular importance on the role of subnational/local authorities.
16. With the transnational nature of CBRN threats, there is also the need for national approaches to properly integrate mechanisms for regional/international cooperation and coordination.
17. ARF member States have varying capabilities, resources and approaches for CBRN incident response at the national level. This presents for a very challenging situation during incidents that require the involvement of regional and relevant international stakeholders. There is a need to test and validate the procedures and methods of engagement between these various stakeholders through such events as TTXs, with the aim of building more effective and harmonized plans of action.
18. A stronger framework for cooperation within the region on addressing biological incidents will reinforce cooperative mechanisms at the operational level, while at the same time supporting efforts at the national level to strengthen CBRN capacities, especially, for ARF member States in the early stages of adopting their action plans and upgrading their capabilities.

Participants

The TTX will be co-chaired by the Philippines and a non-ASEAN ARF member State/s.

Participants will include representatives of relevant government agencies i.e. ministries of foreign affairs, health, interior, communications, defense, armed forces and law enforcement.

Experts representing UN and other relevant international organisations such as BWC-Implementation Support Unit (BWC-ISU), United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), World Health Organization (WHO), Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

(OPCW), and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in the Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD) will be invited as resource persons.

Language, Venue, Date and Duration

Language: English
Location: Manila, Philippines (TBC)
Date: 2020 (Exact dates TBC)
Duration: Three (3) days