

**Opening Remarks of DFA-UNIO Director Paul Uy**  
**ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Cross-Sectoral Security Cooperation**  
**on Bio-Preparedness and Disaster Response**  
**InterContinental Hotel, Makati, Philippines, 26 August 2014**

The Honorable Brian L. Goldbeck, Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of the United States in Manila

Distinguished delegates from the ASEAN Regional Forum members,  
Observers from the different Philippine government agencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

*Magandang umaga sa inyong lahat.* Good morning to all and welcome to the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Cross-Sectoral Security Cooperation on Bio-Preparedness and Disaster Response.

I believe this workshop is most timely. We are all witness to real and potential outbreaks over the past decade, from SARS and H1N1 to MERS-CoV and now Ebola. Moreover, the proliferation of biological weapons means that biological threats are not only natural, but man-made. Given the increased people mobility, it is a wonder how we are able to cope with open borders that characterize our relations.

What I intend to underline here is that the threat of biological agents and pandemics remains ever-present. In such an environment, cross-border cooperation is crucial if we are to address these threats effectively.

As the premier venue for security dialogue in the Asia Pacific, the ASEAN Regional Forum is a logical starting point for cooperation on bio-

preparedness and disaster response. The Philippines and the U.S. have co-chaired five ARF workshops on biological threats since 2009, the most recent of which was last year's ASEAN-wide Inception Planning Workshop. That workshop revealed that, at least in ASEAN, planning for biological events is still at its nascent stage.

Our goal over these next few days is to develop a template for a national plan on bio-preparedness, which you can refer to in the formulation or adjustment of your own national plans. We hope you have had the chance to examine the working draft of this ARF template, which is again included in your document kits.

Just as international cooperation is crucial in tackling biological threats, cooperation among concerned agencies is vital at the national level. Ultimately, what we envision is for ARF members to adopt a "whole-of-government" approach in addressing the full range of biological threats. This is why, if you look around the room today, you will find a mix of experts and practitioners in public health, security enforcement, and disaster management, as well as those involved in crafting policy on biological hazards. All of us here have a role to play in effective cooperation in bio-preparedness and disaster response.

Before I end, I would like to thank our partner, the United States, for continuing commitment to bring issues related to bio-preparedness to the fore in the ASEAN Regional Forum. I look forward to a finalized template to come out of this workshop, which will aid our respective governments in pursuing a whole-of-government approach to bio-preparedness. With that, I wish everyone productive discussions over the next few days. Once again, welcome and good day to all.