

“The United States as a pacific nation is ready to support ASEAN and its regional forums to achieve their long-term goals. In a workshop like this, we are able to formulate regional solutions for national issues like bio-preparedness and disaster response while creating an environment of cooperation and collaboration.”

~ Deputy Chief of Mission Brian L. Goldbeck  
ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Bio-Preparedness  
and Disaster Response Workshop  
Intercontinental Hotel, Makati, Philippines  
Tuesday, August 26, 2014



U.S. Embassy Manila Deputy Chief of Mission Brian L. Goldbeck speaks to ASEAN Regional Forum representatives from 18 nations about the importance of sharing best practices, and increasing the flow of information between different government organizations to ensure the region is ready to combat biological and disease-borne threats. Mr. Goldbeck provided opening remarks at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum on Bio-preparedness and Disaster Response Workshop August 26, 2014, at the Intercontinental Hotel, Makati City.

The workshop’s objectives are for each country to devise national guidelines on bio-preparedness, develop concrete and practical follow-on actions, design a roadmap for multilateral cooperation, and enhance communication and coordination among foreign affairs, public and veterinary health, civilian law enforcement and military sectors.

**ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Bio-Preparedness and  
Disaster Response Workshop  
Opening Remarks by  
U.S. Embassy Manila Deputy Chief of Mission Brian L. Goldbeck**

Intercontinental Hotel, Makati, Philippines  
Tuesday, August 26, 2014

I would like to thank the Government of the Philippines, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations member states and the ASEAN Secretariat for allowing the United States to support ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum in this very important endeavor.

I first want to emphasize the significance and timeliness of the endeavor being initiated by this workshop. World news has placed in front of us visions of the current Ebola Epidemic in West Africa and the recent Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, known as MERS, outbreak in Saudi Arabia. These viruses have caused a great deal of concern not only for our governments, but for our personally safety as well.

It is my hope this workshop leads to a plan that will develop into a regional program that fosters a more secure region with its countries confident, and ready to tackle any biological and disease borne threats to its populations and its future.

In July last year, Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Albert del Rosario, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, and your ASEAN foreign ministers together with their regional forum counterparts approved the Best Practices for Preparedness and Response to a Biological Event as reference for forum participants to develop their own national guidelines on biological event preparedness and response.

Realizing this as an opportunity to address a common concern, the Philippines and the United States organized a series of planning activities leading up to this workshop, which is intended to develop a template for forum participants to consider as a basis when putting together their respective nation's bio-preparedness and disaster response plan.

The outcome of this workshop will be presented to ASEAN Regional Forum ministers in 2015. In the next couple of days, you will be laying the foundation for a program to address biosecurity concerns in the region.

Exploring and implementing best practices, sharing successes, and documenting lessons learned benefits all participants in this forum, and helps better prepare this region in case of a biological disaster.

This information, along with source documents like The Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases, and the UN Security Council resolution 1540 related to biological weapons should guide your deliberations this week as you develop and refine this bio-preparedness template that will contribute to advancing the Hanoi Plan of Action and in turn the ASEAN Vision 2020.

The United States looks forward to assisting ASEAN reach its goals for the 2020 initiative. In line with this plan, one of President Obama's key efforts in the Pacific is to enhance partnerships through multilateral institutions and frameworks, as well as to advance whole-of-government cooperation.

This conference addresses these efforts by bringing together health, disaster management, and military experts from ASEAN Regional Forum countries who can share best practices and increase the flow of information between all parties. I am confident this workshop will effectively improve multilateral partnerships, and advance whole-of-government communications.

At the conclusion of the forum, I hope all participants will have made new connections with colleagues doing similar work in the region and can continue that cooperation past this workshop.

Networking and sharing information in rapidly developing scenarios will be vital in the case of an emergency. Participants should also share material that will assist national bio-preparedness at the national, provincial and local levels.

Finally, this workshop can provide recommended activities and specific agenda items for follow-on ASEAN Regional Forum and related activities in 2015.

The United States as a pacific nation is ready to support ASEAN and its regional forums to achieve these worthwhile goals. In a workshop like this, we are able to

formulate regional solutions for national issues like bio-preparedness and disaster response while creating an environment of cooperation and collaboration.

I would like to conclude by thanking the organizers of this workshop; the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs, the Philippine Department of Health and Marine Corps Forces, Pacific for their hard work and dedication in coordinating this workshop.

Finally to our workshop sponsors, the United States Office of the Secretary of Defense, the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, US Pacific Command and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency Cooperative Biological Engagement Program, thank you.

I look forward to continuing dialogue on these issues and having a productive workshop over the next three days.