



**ARF Workshop for First Response Support for Victims of Terrorism and Other Mass Casualty Events
22-23 September 2015 | InterContinental Hotel, Manila, Philippines**

CONCEPT NOTE

Over the last decades, Southeast Asia has suffered many mass casualty events, from man-made incidents such as terrorist attacks and hazes caused by slash and burn cultivation, to large-scale natural disasters including earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions. The impact of these disasters is great: lives are lost, whole villages are destroyed, food and industrial production is disrupted, infrastructure is damaged, economic growth is hampered and livelihood is negatively affected. Although certain threats are beyond human control, strengthening preparedness and increasing community resilience contribute greatly to preventing or at least mitigating the damage arising from these disasters.

Within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), much attention has been paid to disaster management, preparedness and risk reduction. Following the establishment of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) which was established in early 2003, investments have been made in developing a response action plan, training, cooperation with non-governmental stakeholders such as the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), and public awareness raising. In December 2010, the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) came into force, which provides mechanisms to reduce loss of life and assets resulting from disasters in Southeast Asia and enhance joint responses and cooperation, and mandated the establishment of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA Center) in Jakarta, Indonesia. On the national level, countries have designated agencies responsible for disaster management, developed national prevention and response strategies, and increased preparedness through public awareness campaigns and training.

Similarly, ASEAN has also focused on preventing and countering terrorism, given the persistent threat of terrorism in the region. Early in 2013, the ratification of the ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism was completed by all members, which includes as areas of cooperation promoting capacity building, increasing public awareness, enhancing cross-border cooperation and intelligence sharing, and strengthening the readiness to deal with CBRN and cyber terrorism. In addition to regional and international cooperation, governments in Southeast Asia have invested in national and local capacities to prevent and counter terrorism.

However, in many cases, the responsibilities for managing and coordinating responses to mass casualty terrorism attacks and those related to natural disasters lie with different agencies, and strategies, expertise and experiences are not always shared between these two domains. This is unfortunate, since there are similarities between the two, especially in relation to identifying the immediate needs of victims following mass casualty events and developing strategies and trainings for first responders to prepare them to meet those needs.

To take stock of these national and regional efforts in Southeast Asia, as well as international good practices in the area of first responder support to victims of terrorism and other mass casualty events, a workshop will be hosted under the auspices of the ASEAN Regional Forum on 22-23 September in Manila, The Philippines. The workshop is co-chaired by the Government of the Philippines and the Government of the United States of America, and will be co-organized with the Global Center on Cooperative Security.

The two-day workshop will seek to underscore:

- the value of sharing and analyzing good practices and mechanisms regarding the treatment of victims and survivors of a terrorist attack as well as other mass casualty incidents, including government and civil society responses, victim's assistance, and first responder preparedness and procedures in the direct aftermath of such events;
- the importance of having national strategies, plans, and procedures to effectively and efficiently respond to a terrorist attack and other mass casualty incidents;
- progress made within ASEAN in both national and regional preparedness for and responses to mass casualty incidents; and
- the lessons learned from experiences of victims and survivors with first responders.

Through various panel discussions and an interactive tabletop exercise, the meeting aims to formulate concrete suggestions, policy measures and mechanisms to improve assistance by first responders to victims and survivors of terrorist attacks and other mass casualty events in the ASEAN region, as well as enhancing cooperation among ARF members in this domain.

This two-day workshop aims at inviting participants from the ASEAN region and among ARF members, including first responders, government officials responsible for policies and strategies relating to mass casualty events (both man-made and natural), and civil society organizations providing assistance to victims and survivors of such incidents.