

**Co-Chairs' Summary Report of  
the Seventh ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief  
Helsinki, 11-12 October 2007**

**Introduction**

1. Pursuant to the decision of the 14<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) held in Manila on 2 August 2007, the 7<sup>th</sup> ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief (ISM on DR) was held in Helsinki on 11-12 October 2007. The Meeting was co-chaired by the European Union and Indonesia.
2. Delegates from all ARF participating countries except Cambodia, DPRK, Burma/Myanmar, Mongolia, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea, attended the meeting. Officials of the ASEAN Secretariat as well as an UN OCHA representative also participated in the meeting. The List of Participants appears as **ANNEX 1**.

**Opening Session**

3. Ambassador Benjamin Bassin of the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs opened the meeting on behalf of European Union, stressing the strong commitment of the EU to the ARF process and stressing the key importance of disaster relief cooperation in the Asia-Pacific to which the EU wished to contribute with its wealth of experience and tools. Ambassador Primo A. Joelianto of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia recalled that many countries in ASEAN, including Indonesia were continuously hit by natural disasters and that therefore improved disaster response cooperation with partners were a political priority in the region. He looked forward to tangible outcomes of the meeting. The Opening Remarks appears as **ANNEXES 2 and 3**.
4. The Meeting adopted the Agenda which appears as **ANNEX 4**.

**Review of Activities since the last ISM**

5. The Meeting recalled the outcomes of the 13<sup>th</sup> ARF in Kuala Lumpur that had paved the way for the adoption of General ARF Guidelines on Disaster Relief, the development of the ARF Standby Arrangements, the development of the ARF Standard Operating Procedures and the sharing of assets and capabilities, and reviewed activities related to disaster relief cooperation since the 6<sup>th</sup> ISM on DR in Qingdao in 2006 in Qingdao in September 2006 on the basis of an information paper by the ASEAN Secretariat (**ANNEX 5**). Indonesia requested the ASEAN Secretariat to provide an update on the ARF contact points for disaster management.
6. Japan briefed on the 11<sup>th</sup> Tokyo Defense Forum on 24-25 October 2006 (**ANNEX 6**) which had focused on disaster relief just as the Forum in 2005. Reaffirming the need to move forward the cooperation on disaster relief, the Forum had noted recommendations regarding the development of strategies and procedure for enhanced inter-governmental cooperation in this area, the improvement of military-to-military and civil-military coordination, including through joint training as well as better information sharing in the pre-deployment and actual response phases. RoK stressed the importance of national measures supporting the regional cooperation

and briefed on the national law for Rapid Disaster Relief overseas which entered into force on March 2007.

## **International Framework of Disaster Relief**

### **UN Coordinating Role in the Disaster Relief**

7. Thomas Peter of the Emergency Services Branch of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) in Geneva presented OCHA's mandate and UN tools in disaster relief (**ANNEX 7**). As it was of key importance to respect the role of the national government and not to establish parallel or conflicting coordination structures. OCHA provided for rapid disaster assessment and coordination (UNDAC) and made information available to all relief actors as well as for general coordination through the On Site Operations Coordination Center (OSOCC). The importance of the development of rapid deployment modules, standardised equipment and software, training and civil-military coordination was further stressed.
8. As to the development of ARF work in this area, the OCHA representative recommended to use the established international standards as framework and follow the UN methodologies. When it comes to establishing a register of assets it might be more useful to focus on recording assets that have been successfully deployed in response to previous disasters in the region. This would provide an indication of what could be relied on rather than asking countries to register potential assets that might be unavailable in a given response situation as the conditions for their deployment are not met. The OCHA representative finally encouraged participants to make use of a number of web-based tools such as the virtual OOSOC and IRIN – the Integrated Regional Information Network.
9. Participants underlined the importance of UN mechanisms and tools, including the virtual OSOCC as the tools for information dissemination and response coordination. Canada underlined that the envisaged ARF database should not duplicate but rather complement existing UN mechanisms. Japan spoke to the challenge of coordinating NGOs. In response to the latter, OCHA explained that NGOs were best reached by training, including through simulation exercises and the development of standards that would be eventually enforced via the existing peer pressure. In general, joint simulation exercises help best to address the challenges of cooperation and coordination, including with partners such as NATO and the EU with which OCHA had agreements with. In response to further questions, the OCHA representative stressed that training should focus on improving the specificity and direction of the requests for international assistance and that national coordination that needs to be done by an effective yet permanent enough body in a given country.
10. The Meeting noted that the ARF ISM on DR should in general continue to engage with UN OCHA to ensure compatibility and complementarity of activities and to minimize duplication with existing regional efforts.

### **Disaster Preparedness and Response Arrangements of the European Union**

11. Alessandro Villa of the Crisis Platform of the European Commission's Directorate-General for External Relations (RELEX) presented EU emergency response tools

which form part of a wide range of EU instruments for external action, including crisis management (**ANNEXES 8 and 9**). The EU as world-wide biggest humanitarian actors has become even more active over the past years due to the increasing number of conflicts and natural disaster and the growing EU foreign and security policy role. The EU grounded all its action in this area on the UN standards and mechanisms and would only act upon request of the country concerned. As largely a civilian actor the EU puts emphasize on the civilian response both in general crisis management and the response to disaster, although military capabilities might be needed in some situations.

12. The European Commission representative also gave an overview of the humanitarian aid efforts of the EU's office for humanitarian assistance ECHO and the work of the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) which coordinated EU civil protection efforts and assisted with assistance to third countries. The development of coordination mechanisms between EU Member States might hold some lessons for the development of ASEAN disaster management and emergency response. An important focus of the EU's assistance went into disaster preparedness and mid- to long-term reconstruction, mainly through the large network of European delegations around the world.
13. Delegates addressed the definition of crisis, the potential and limits of early warning of natural disasters, the EU-internal civil-military coordination, the future involvement of the EU with ARF efforts under way in this field, the possible role of private actors and the role of the fight against global warming. The Philippines representative stressed the importance of keeping the integrity of "disaster relief" as a focus area under a humanitarian framework in contrast to "disaster" arising from political conflict. The EC representative stressed that the EU was involved with disaster relief work on all levels – it partnered with the UN and other global actors such as the World Bank just as it inter-acted on regional, country and local-levels. In many third countries intensive support was given to community-level disaster preparedness and response. As to the EU-internal coordination, a number of EU working bodies involving the EU Member States provided such coordination, including of the use of military assets. The methodologies and procedures were still under development. The EU headquarters in Brussels now had a civil-military planning cell for crisis management operations that also developed general concepts in this area further. The EU had also established a European Peacekeeping Partnership with civil society actors including NGOs.

### **ASEAN Cooperation on Disaster Management**

14. Retno Astrini of the ARF Unit in the ASEAN Secretariat briefed about the evolving ASEAN cooperation on disaster management which has gained momentum over the past four years following the creation of the ASEAN Committee for Disaster Management (ACDM) in 2003 (**ANNEX 10**). Work of ASEAN in this area was mainly pursued by the ASEAN Regional programme on disaster management. The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response of 2005 (AADMER) had the objective to provide effective mechanisms to achieve substantial reduction of disaster losses in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets, and to jointly respond to disaster emergencies through concerted national efforts and intensified regional and international co-operation (Article 2). ASEAN pursued the development of

SASOPs and a Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA) and will soon run a regional disaster relief simulation exercise.

15. Singapore as host of the 2007 ASEAN Regional Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercise (ARDEX 07) provided more information on its purpose, namely to test the operability of guidelines and SOPs. Singapore emphasized the importance of having flexible guidelines that can effectively coordinate cross-border cooperation, and do not duplicate existing efforts. Japan expressed interest in participating in this exercise. In response to a question regarding the possibility of utilizing AHA also for ARF disaster relief activities, the ASEAN Secretariat explained that pending the ratification of the AADMER by all ASEAN Member Countries, the AHA Center could not be fully operationalized. In response to a question by Canada, the ASEAN Secretariat clarified that the AHA Center is not to replace OCHA, rather it is to support the work of ASEAN member states and OCHA.

## **ARF Cooperation in Disaster Management**

### **ARF General Guidelines for Disaster Relief Cooperation**

16. China gave an overview of the General Guidelines on Disaster Relief Cooperation which had been adopted by Ministers at the 14<sup>th</sup> ARF on 2 August 2007 in Manila (**ANNEX 11**). China also recalled that it had circulated Survey Forms on Disaster Relief Resources in 2006, reported that it had received information by 14 participants and encouraged others to complete the forms and submit them. Once all forms are received, China would present a matrix of ARF disaster resources to the ASEAN Secretariat. China underlined that the information would be treated as voluntary and for planning purposes only, and be held securely. Australia outlined that it had submitted an inventory of defense capabilities and assets for disaster relief operations and encouraged such information to be held securely on the ARFNet.

### **ARF Standard Operating Procedures for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (SOPs)**

17. Australia briefed the meeting on the outcomes of the Initial Planning Conference for the ARF Disaster Relief Desk-top Exercise (IPC) held in Darwin on 4-7 September 2007 (**ANNEX 12**), and the initial structure developed for the ARF Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Disaster Relief and Humanitarian Assistance. The overall aim of developing such SOPs which was based on the 2006 ARF Statement on disaster relief and emergency response was to improve speed and efficiency of the ARF's disaster response action. Feedback from the IPC to support the ongoing development of ARF HADR SOPs included defining the key principles for ARF coordination in immediate response and preparedness, the examination of possible coordination mechanisms, and determining national points of contact and resources and assets.

18. The Australian delegate highlighted the need for participants to promote civil and military cooperation in disaster relief operations and underlined the importance of ensuring the ARF SOPs are consistent with and complement internationally agreed principles and existing guidelines and mechanisms for disaster relief cooperation while providing a value-added set of operating principles reflecting and appropriate to the ARF operating environment. The SOPs were intended to be a "living document", to be regularly reviewed and updated. Although Ministerial approval of the document as such

would not be sought, the documents will still have to be approved by the ARF SOM. ARF participants were encouraged to submit further comments on the SOPs following the meeting. A revised draft will be circulated in February 2008 in advance of the desk-top exercise scheduled to be held in Indonesia in May 2008. Further updates on the exercise and SOPs will be presented at the next ISG on CBM & PD in early November.

### **ARF Disaster Relief Exercise**

19. Indonesia presented a preparatory notification for the desk-top exercise to be co-hosted with Australia at the Naval Staff College in Jakarta on 1-2 May 2008 (**ANNEXES 13-15**) the intention of which was to test the SOPs and which would also include representatives from the relevant institutions. Indonesia also presented the draft scenario for the exercise - a natural disaster in a fictitious country that suffers volcanic eruption, earthquake, and tsunami and needs external assistance – to which comments were welcome (**ANNEXES 16 and 17**). Regarding the area chosen for the scenario map, China suggested not to locate the fictitious country in a sensitive conflict area. The co-hosts took note of this suggestion.

20. The US gave an update to the voluntary demonstration of response exercise to be co-hosted with the Philippines in 2009 which would be based on the SOPs and should also serve to improve inter-operability and to enhance civil-military coordination throughout the region. The Philippines delegate stated that the Philippines looked forward to hosting the venue of the voluntary response exercise and, with reference to the SOPs, stressed the importance of consistency and complementarity with existing UN and ASEAN arrangements.

### **Draft ARF Standby Arrangements**

21. Indonesia briefed the Meeting on the development of the ARF Standby Arrangements (latest draft in **ANNEX 18**), underlining that the intention was to create complementarity with similar international exercises and regional initiatives. The envisaged paper should also be considered a “living document”. Currently this work was carried forward in parallel with the development of ARF SOPs but the possibility of merging them into one package remained on the table. Indonesia encouraged participants to submit further feedback to the draft and announced to present a more comprehensive draft at the Brunei ISG meeting. Swift progress on the draft seemed desirable, the objective being to complete work on it by the SOM in May 2008. The US as the Indonesia’s partner in leading the development of ARF Standby Arrangements expressed the view that the ASEAN SASOP was a good model, combining SOP and Standby Arrangements. Many noted with positive interest merging the ARF SOPs and the Standby Arrangements. Australia noted in this context that the SOPs had been progressed as a distinct initiative with ARF participants’ endorsement and but noted the practical need for the SOPs to be compliant with related documents such as the standby arrangements. Australia outlined the need to review the document before further comments on the Indonesian draft.

22. Some participants underlined the need to continue a thorough examination of the draft. Japan requested clarification of the nature of the commitments in response to which Indonesia underlined that ARF commitments were of a non-binding nature and contributions would be made on a voluntary basis. The EU pointed to objections of its

Member States to create EU-internal let alone international stand-by arrangements if that meant entering binding commitments prior to a disaster. Moreover, the articulation of a possible future ARF centre with the existing EU mechanism MIC would have to be examined in a thorough examination of the draft. The US explained that the data provided for the standby arrangements should focus on listing capabilities rather than specific units or assets alleviating some of the expressed concerns. China pointed to the fact that the ARF as such had no Secretariat of its own and that the future coordination of this area of worked needed to be clarified.

### **Environmental Aspects of Relief Operations - Response to Environmental Disaster**

23. Kalervo Jolma of the Finnish Environment Institute gave a presentation on the protection of the maritime environment of the Baltic Sea, including Finnish efforts and international cooperation in the Baltic region to this effect (**ANNEX 19**). The work was based on the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment on the Baltic Sea Area. As the Baltic Sea is already quite heavily polluted and as it is the main route for Russian oil transports, Finland put an effective and 24-hour response readiness in place, consisting of a response vessel fleet with specific equipment to deal with oil spills and surveillance planes. The newly formed European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) based in Lisbon affords support to these efforts.

### **Future Direction of ARF ISM DR - Outlook on Future Work**

24. Participants made proposals for further activities. Thailand suggested to focus more on training and capacity building, in particular to make more use of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC) based in Thailand and regional centres of excellence as well as to promote cooperation amongst centres of excellence in ARF participating countries. The EU, while it might face some constraints in actively engaging with the whole body of ARF work under development due to its geographic distance and particular nature as supra-national organisation, underlined its commitment to disaster relief in the Asia-Pacific, including through increasing humanitarian and development assistance and cooperation in capacity- and institution-building.

25. Indonesia announced that the next ISM on DR had been tentatively scheduled for October 2008 in Indonesia and again co-chaired by Indonesia and the European Union. New candidates from the ARF participants for co-chairing the ISMs on DR in 2009 and 2010 needed to come forward. Indonesia further suggested that the shepherds' group that steering the ARF's work on DR since the 2005 ISM in Bandung was flexible in its current composition of Australia, China, EU, Indonesia, Malaysia, US and facilitated by the ASEAN Secretariat.

26. The Meeting noted announcements of further meetings, including the ARF seminar on cyber terrorism, 16-19 October 2007 in Busan/RoK, the ISG on CBM&PD, 1-2 November 2007 in Brunei, the second ISG on CBM&PD, 1-3 April 2008 in Canada as well as of the ARF SOM on 9 May and the ARF Ministerial on 24 July 2008 in Singapore.

### **Closing Session**

27. Participants thanked Finland as the host for the excellent arrangements for the meeting and paid tribute to the out-going Director of the ARF unit in the ASEAN

Secretariat Mr. M.C. Abad, Jr. wishing him success for his next appointment within the ASEAN Secretariat.