

## **Best Practices for Preparedness and Response to a Biological Event**

*[The United States, on behalf of fellow co-chairs Philippines and Australia, is requesting review of this proposed ARF Best Practices for Preparedness and Response to a Biological Event. Please direct comments or questions to Randall Beisecker ([BeiseckerRT@state.gov](mailto:BeiseckerRT@state.gov)) at the U.S. Department of State. Once comments have been received, this document will then be tabled at the ARF ISG for consideration to send forward to the ARF SOM and for ministerial approval at the 20<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Regional Forum.]*

### **Background**

The 2012 ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Workshop on Preparedness and Response to a Biological Event, held 5-7 September 2012 in Manila, Philippines, shared technical information and experiences on approaches to preparedness and response as applied by ARF member states. The workshop discussed the principles needed for enhancing dynamic public health strategies to strengthen national systems and infrastructure as they relate to the preparedness and response to a biological event. The workshop recognized that national strategies for enhancing biosecurity and biosafety issues vary country to country and that local solutions need to be found to local problems. It encouraged member states to adapt their own guidelines to suit their own individual circumstances. To this end, participants drafted the following list of best practices as guidance for implementation of a preparedness and response system. This list of best practices can be a useful tool for national governments, assistance providers, and the ARF in their respective implementation of national and regional preparedness and response cooperation. This list is not exhaustive and not all of these practices are applicable to all countries; rather this list is intended to provide useful reference points for countries in developing their own national systems.

### **“Best Practices”**

- Regional and International Coordination
  - o Utilize current existing regional organizations where possible to coordinate on biological issues--ASEAN, ARF, EAS, APEC, ADMM+, etc.
  - o Use these fora to focus on policy-level discussions and provide guidance for operational level cooperation
  - o Seek to complement and synchronize efforts
  - o Recognizing that health crosses many sectors, consider how to incorporate discussions on biological issues during meetings on other issues, including disaster relief/humanitarian issues
  - o Make sure that there is adequate follow-through, continuity, and information sharing after international meetings/workshops

- Consider creating a centralized database of readouts/recommendations/after-action plans of previous meetings/exercise/workshops
- Consider standardizing practices in the region where feasible and appropriate
- Ask international organizations, such as WHO/OIE/FAO/UN/G8GP to play a more active role/provide assistance on biological events
- Identify biological projects that can be implemented in partnership with the EU CBRN Center of Excellence
- Prevention
  - Strengthen laboratory biosafety and biosecurity to mitigate risks of accidental release or intentional misuse of pathogens. Protect personnel from accidental or intentional infections during a biological event
  - Integrate local and national health agencies, emergency response groups, law enforcement agencies, customs and border control agencies, military units, the private sector, and international organizations and laboratories
  - Improve mechanisms to share information
- Preparedness:
  - Focus on surveillance and early detection to permit a prompt response that will mitigate consequences
  - Strengthen surveillance to include especially dangerous pathogens determined by risk assessment
  - Raise awareness of first responders, health care workers, and public health officials at the local as well as national level
  - Ensure first responders and medical community are properly equipped in advance so they are able to respond rapidly as needed
  - Develop a risk communication plan, and strong communication and data exchange networks across sectors to bolster detection, reporting, and response
  - Develop a national response framework that delineates the command and control structure for a biological event
  - Ensure a surge capacity, including staff, supplies and space, to effectively respond to a variety of biological agents
  - Stockpile vaccines, drugs and PPE Seek to coordinate and integrate across the human and animal health fields at a national level, through sharing of lab capacity and resources
- Response:
  - Strengthen epidemiological capacity to ensure quick detection, diagnostics, and characterization

- Develop reporting structures to ensure rapid and accurate reporting of data from local to national and international level
- Communication System:
  - Draft education material to raise public awareness before an incident occurs
  - Prepare public outreach strategies to effectively communicate accurate, timely, and consistent information to the general population as a public health emergency unfolds.
  - Identify a single spokesperson to interact with the public and the press to create a unified, national voice and prevent misinformation, which could cause health systems to become overwhelmed by the “worried well”
- Continue to advance full implementation of the WHO International Health Regulations (2005), especially as these regulations apply to strengthening global alert and response systems