

## 2006 ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM STATEMENT ON DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

*Issued in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 28 July 2006*

The Chairman of the ASEAN Regional Forum, on behalf of the participating countries, issues the following statement:

**Expressing** condolences and sympathy to the victims, their families, the Government and the people of the countries that suffered significant human, social and economic losses and damages from the unprecedented tsunami disaster and earthquake as well as typhoons, cyclones/hurricanes, floods and landslides in various ARF participating countries;

**Recalling** the Declaration on Action to Strengthen Emergency Relief, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Prevention in the aftermath of the Earthquake and Tsunami Disaster of 26 December 2004 issued at the Special ASEAN Leaders' Meeting on the Aftermath of Earthquake and Tsunami in Jakarta, 6 January 2005; the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 (HFA), adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, in Kobe, 18-22 January 2005 to effectively tackle disaster reduction; the Ministerial Meeting on Regional Cooperation on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangement in Phuket, 29 January 2005; the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, 26 July 2005; the Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction in Beijing, 27-28 September 2005; as well as international conferences concerning natural or other disasters, including manmade, under the auspices of the United Nations;

**Deeply concerned** about the additional socio-economic burden borne by the ARF participating countries, particularly the developing countries, due to the number, scale and increasing impact of natural disasters and other disaster situations;

**Noting** with appreciation the solidarity, brotherhood, sense of humanity, generous outpouring of support and constructive cooperation shown by the international community, including ARF participating countries, to help affected communities with humanitarian assistance in response to recent natural disasters, including the 2004 earthquake and tsunami in the Indian ocean and the 2005 South Asia earthquake;

**Reaffirming** that humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality;

**Mindful** of the importance of encouraging regional and international cooperation to enhance preparedness and support the efforts of affected countries to mitigate and respond to natural disasters in all their phases and to reduce loss of life and other social, economic and global environmental assets;

**Emphasizing** the importance of civil-military cooperation in meeting regional peace and security challenges as well as identifying possible areas of cooperation in developing civil-military cooperation as an effective tool in disaster relief operations, at a pace comfortable to all, consistent with internationally agreed principles;

**Recognizing** the need for common understanding of civil-military cooperation, and the development of standardized civil-military coordination procedures consistent with existing international guidelines;

**Recognizing** also the need for appropriate and people-centered early warning and the dissemination of information and disaster management plans at all levels, including at the community level, which has thus far received rather limited attention from the international community and national governments;

**Noting** the importance of the availability of funds in the region for immediate disbursement, and the appropriateness of contributions to support timely and effective responses to humanitarian emergencies and noting international efforts to increase the pool of resources available;

**Reaffirming** that States have the primary responsibility to protect the people and property on their territories from natural disasters;

**Recalling** that the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of states must be fully respected in accordance with the charter of the United Nations. In this context, humanitarian assistance should be provided with the consent of the affected country and in principle on the basis of an appeal by the affected country;

**Emphasizing** the importance of developing and strengthening institutions, mechanisms and capacities at the sub-national, national, regional as well as the international levels to support community capacities to reduce disaster risk;

**Reaffirming** the central role of the United Nations in providing leadership and coordinating the efforts of the international community;

**Acknowledging** the importance of the ASEAN Standby Arrangements for Disaster Relief and Emergency Response, the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management, ASEAN Disaster Information Sharing and Communication Network, the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM), and other regional instruments on disaster management and emergency response, including UN bodies, and recognizing the need for close coordination between regional and international bodies;

**Recognizing** the importance of the national sovereignty and integrity as well as the international law in the process of disaster management and emergency response.

ARF participating countries will endeavor to enhance cooperation that support and complement existing regional and international disaster management and emergency response mechanisms in the following areas:

#### **A. RISK IDENTIFICATION AND MONITORING**

(1) to take appropriate measures to identify regional disaster risks and risk management capacities and conduct disaster risk assessment covering among others; natural hazards, risk assessment, monitoring vulnerabilities and appraisal of disaster management capacities and the inputs/resources required to appropriately reinforce these;

(2) to share information with regard to forecasting and monitoring hazards and disasters to interested ARF participants; information transmission, feedback and action (particularly relating to populations at risk).

#### **B. DISASTER PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS**

(1) to develop an ARF Virtual Task Force on multi-hazard Disaster Response Management in order to promote ARF cooperation in disaster-related issues;

- (2) to support the work of UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission in building up an Indian Ocean Tsunami Early Warning System and to link up with other regional efforts to create a global multi-hazard early warning system;
- (3) to call upon all ARF participating countries to integrate disaster risk reduction efforts into their national legislative frameworks, policies and strategies in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015;
- (4) to establish a directory of specialized experts/groups of experts in disaster relief and emergency preparedness in the ARFNet and share it with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs;
- (5) to maintain an updated regional database of emergencies response and disaster management contacts, and to develop a joint database of assets and capabilities available to be shared with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Central Register of Disaster Management Capacities and the Register of Military, Civil Defense and Civil Protection Assets (MCDA);
- (6) to compile ARF participating countries' disaster management procedures/manuals and capabilities in order to enhance common understanding of respective countries' emergency preparedness procedures through sharing of lessons learned and best practices;
- (7) to work towards the development of ARF regional standby arrangements for immediate humanitarian assistance including the development of Standard Operating Procedures (of non-binding nature) in close cooperation with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs;
- (8) to allocate adequate resources for the development and implementation of disaster management policies at all levels of administration;
- (9) to collaborate with international partners to clarify their possible roles in supporting national disaster response plans;
- (10) to consider, as appropriate, the development of bilateral/regional/multilateral legal arrangements/framework to facilitate and in line with disaster management and emergency response related international assistance;
- (11) to improve communications protocols with international data warning providers (in terms of 24 hour-per-day, seven-day-per-week notification and verification data input and warnings with all critical international data providers);
- (12) to provide early warning information to ARF participating countries, which include seismic and sea level data, data on seismic origins and to link with other warning systems and to exchange data in the case of an emergency.

### **C. EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND DISASTER RELIEF**

- (1) to consider, as appropriate, the development of ARF general guidelines on disaster management and emergency response for the use of both civilian and military personnel within the ARF participating countries and to ensure consistency with existing UN guidelines and ASEAN mechanisms on disaster management and emergency response, civil-military cooperation and other international capabilities;
- (2) to enhance networking and coordination between national Search and Rescue (SAR) and other relief agencies of ARF participants, and with the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG);

(3) to promote coordination among donors, relief agencies, and the international community in carrying out short, medium and long-term rehabilitation, reconstruction and risk-reduction efforts led by the Governments of disasters-affected countries, in cooperation with the International Recovery Platform co-organized by the UN (UNDP, ISDR, OCHA and ILO), the World Bank, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC);

(4) to receive warning information and to coordinate with national disaster warning center of each country to maximize efficiency in emergency response and disaster relief.

#### **D. CAPACITY BUILDING**

(1) to undertake research and education, as well as sharing of knowledge and expertise among ARF participating countries with a view to strengthening capacities in the field of disaster risk reduction;

(2) to strengthen national/regional preparedness and disaster management capability through education and training, sharing of expertise, desktop disaster relief simulation exercises and combined joint exercises in civil military operations;

(3) to promote networking, enhance coordination and establish exchange/attachment programs between and among ARF participants' emergency management agencies;

(4) to welcome and make use of the Multi-Donor Voluntary Trust on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangements in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia, which has been established on 26 September 2005 under UNESCAP administration for the establishment of an effective early warning system in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia.

ARF participating countries are to regularly review the progress of these and other efforts to further strengthen cooperation in disaster relief at the subsequent ARF Intersessional-Meeting on Disaster Relief as well as other ARF meetings.

**Kuala Lumpur**

**28 July 2006**