



Background

The third annual ASEAN Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination Workshop was hosted April 29 – May 4, 2018 by the Thailand Ministry of Defence. The meeting drew over fifty attendees from around the Asia-Pacific to discuss the growing importance of civil-military relations in disaster response. Participating were representatives from every ASEAN Member State, all the “Plus” countries from the ADMM+, UNOCHA, WHO, IFRC, ICRC, Thailand Red Cross/Red Crescent Society, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations. In concert with One ASEAN, One Response, four themes underpinned the workshop: openness, sharing, collaboration, and coordination. In his closing remarks, GEN Somsak Roongsita, Director, Office of Policy and Planning, Thailand Ministry of Defence, stressed the challenges inherent to civil-military coordination, requiring understanding and trust in order to overcome language, cultural and institutional barriers.

CFE-DM Role

For the third year in a row, CFE-DM, alongside UNOCHA and the AHA Centre, supported the Thai MoD in hosting their ASEAN neighbors, ADMM+ nations and partner organizations to further enhance civil-military organization in disaster response. CFE-DM leadership briefed on the crucial importance of coordination mechanisms and information sharing in disaster response, as well as the role of the U.S. as an assisting state. CFE-DM representatives also contributed to agenda development, coordination of conference speakers and VIP attendance, and served as facilitators for working groups focused on cyclone and tsunami preparedness in Myanmar and Thailand, respectively.



Participants

ASEAN:

- Brunei
- Cambodia
- Indonesia
- Lao PDR
- Malaysia
- Myanmar
- Philippines
- Singapore
- Thailand
- Vietnam

ADMM+ countries:

- Australia
- China
- India
- Japan
- New Zealand
- Russia
- South Korea
- USA

International Organizations:

- AHA Centre
- ASEAN Secretariat
- IFRC
- Thai Red Cross
- UNOCHA
- WHO

Non-governmental Organizations:

- Raumkatanyu Foundation
- Save the Children
- World Vision

Private Sector:

- DHL



Major Conclusions

Trust

A consistent theme repeated throughout the workshop was the importance of trust among disaster response practitioners (“trust-the most important ingredient in disaster response;” “coordination occurs at the speed of trust”). The ASEAN role in Marawi, Rakhine, and the ongoing Yangon landfill fires were cited as examples. ERAT teams and the ACMM were also named as practical examples of building trust among ASEAN Member States.

Coordination

On the theme of coordination, it was observed that the MNCC has been formally written into the national plans of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Nepal. The AJDRP, ADMM+, and RCG were cited as mechanisms to share best practices, lessons learned and reinforce relationships. The deployment of ASEAN ERAT teams, offering technical assistance (assessment, firefighting, and public health) to Myanmar in fighting the Yangon landfill fires, constitute a present-day case in point of the benefits of coordination among ASEAN neighbors.

Regional Capacity

Several speakers lauded growing regional capacity in HADR; increasingly robust ASEAN ERAT teams; the ASEAN Centre of Military Medicine in Thailand; USAR teams (Singapore, Malaysia, and in future, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand); EMTs (noting their role in Haiyan, the Ebola outbreak, Nepal earthquake, and Cyclone Pam (Vanuatu)); pre-positioned disaster relief commodities in Malaysia, but future stocks in the Philippines and Thailand.

Way Ahead

The annual ASEAN Civil-Military Coordination workshop is an ideal venue to discuss humanitarian Civil-Military coordination among critical actors involved in an HADR response. Thailand’s Ministry of Defense desires to have this workshop sanctioned by ASEAN is key to its survival and its ability to positively impact Civil Military Coordination for the region. A continual focus on agenda development, participant mix, and identification of appropriate speakers makes it a model complement to regional forums such as the Regional Consultative Group on Humanitarian Civil-Military coordination for Asia and the Pacific, and the ADMM Plus HADR Experts Working Group.

