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ASEAN-driven Disaster Response: Progress and Potential



Disaster Response and Recovery Workshop . Courtesy of Flickr account of NJ Car.

The ASEAN Leaders signed the “ASEAN Declaration on One ASEAN One Response: ASEAN Responding to Disasters as One in the Region and Outside the Region” at the 28th and 29th ASEAN Summit in Vientiane held from 6-8 September 2016. The declaration was signed to strengthen coordination and cooperation mechanisms in responding to disasters to achieve faster response, mobilise greater resources and establish stronger coordination to ensure ASEAN’s collective response to disasters. It is based on the principle of harnessing the individual and collective strengths of different sectors and stakeholders in ASEAN to effectively respond to disasters inside and outside the region. This declaration at the Summit highlights that ASEAN has a significant role in disaster response.

ASEAN’s role in humanitarian action

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has played an increasingly active role in humanitarian action within its region, developing a binding ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) as well as the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA Centre). With these frameworks and tools, ASEAN has responded to disasters within the region such as Cyclone Nargis in 2008 and Typhoon Haiyan in late 2013. The first-ever ASEAN Emergency Rapid Assessment Team (ERAT), which comprised officials, experts and NGO personnel from member states, was deployed to Myanmar in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis. The Yangon-based Tripartite Core Group (TCG), established by ASEAN, brought the Myanmar Government, ASEAN

and the United Nations together to facilitate response operations. During Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, the AHA Centre disseminated important information to stakeholders in ASEAN via email alerts and various social media platforms. These events signify that ASEAN has been playing an active role in humanitarian assistance and disaster response.

One ASEAN, One Response

The ASEAN Declaration on One ASEAN One Response at the 28th and 29th ASEAN Summit brought some notable points from Member States that civilian and military assets, resources, capabilities, and capacities, which may be available for the ASEAN Standby Arrangements, can be mobilised immediately to disaster-affected areas through the coordination of the AHA Centre. The declaration

affirmed the AHA Centre as the primary ASEAN regional coordinating agency on disaster management and emergency response as well as endorsed the ASEAN-Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT) as the official resource of ASEAN. In order to foster disaster resilience in member states and enhance the capacities for natural disaster responses, it is important to engage all groups of stakeholders in all sectors, especially at the community or grassroots level.

Way Forward

Moving forward, governments should promote public-private partnerships in order to mobilize the resources owned by different groups of stakeholders and facilitate humanitarian responses. Further into the future, ASEAN and the AHA Centre should focus on the issue of emergency preparedness as promoting preparedness

would allow ASEAN member states to focus on mitigating the impact of future disasters. Lastly, humanitarian coordination and trust among member states should be enhanced in order to facilitate the process of turning the vision of One ASEAN One Response into reality.



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Suggested Readings:

- ASEAN Declaration on One ASEAN, One Response: ASEAN Responding to Disasters as One in the Region and Outside the Region, September 2016.
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- Huong Ha, Governance Framework for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response in ASEAN, *Middle East Institute*, July 2016.
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CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY AND NATURAL DISASTERS

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Theresa May: UK to ratify Paris climate change deal this year

Rowena Mason and
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Marrakesh, Morocco

The Hugo Conference: Environment, Migration, Politics

3–5 November 2016
Paris, France

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Vietnam.net

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China to rein in growth of green energy industry

The Straits Times

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Indonesia's nuclear preparedness strong: IAEA

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Courtesy of Flickr account of IAEA Imagebank and used under a creative commons license.

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Geraldine Goh,
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Photo courtesy by Josh Estey, through Flickr account of Department of Affairs and Trade, Australia, and used under a creative commons license.

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Grass food crops facing climate change challenge

Mark Kinver,
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Singapore can play key role in food technology: Khaw

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2-4 November 2016
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Singapore to develop National Diabetes Database as efforts against disease intensifies

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Courtesy of Flickr account of DMA Hawaii Forward Center and used under a creative commons license.

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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF



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