

## ***“Building a disaster-resilient ASEAN”***

Speaking Notes for the Key Note Speech by  
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at *“A Resilient ASEAN Region: A Red Cross Red Crescent Seminar”*

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### **Appreciation and Welcome**

- Allow me, first of all, to thank the Singapore Red Cross for inviting me to this seminar to share IFRC perspectives on building a resilient ASEAN region.
- I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Singapore on taking on the Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2018 and wish it success in achieving its goal of building a ***“Resilient and Innovative”*** ASEAN.
- I hope this event held just before the opening of the 32th ASEAN Summit (25-28 April) will provide an opportunity to share common commitments and practical solutions and to strengthen partnerships to make ASEAN more resilient and innovative.
- It heartens me to see so many varied people and organisations represented in this room. Now more than ever, partnerships depend on the ability, both of us as individuals and the larger organisations that we are part of, to be able to communicate and engage with each other, despite our differences, towards common goals. Given that each of you represent a wide and diverse set of stakeholders today, I am confident that we will have a wealth of experiences to draw from, but more importantly tangible ideas of how we can work more closely, expand on existing, and build new partnerships reaching more vulnerable people in the ASEAN region.

### **ASEAN at the crossroad of sustainable development**

- ASEAN represents a significant portion of the world’s population and economy.
  - When ASEAN embarked on the ASEAN Vision 2020 in 1997, its GDP was US\$694 billion. That **GDP** is expected to reach **almost US\$4 trillion in 2020**.

However, **this rapid economic growth is threatened** by a range of risks. The Southeast Asian region is among the most prone to disasters. From 2004 to 2014, an estimated 191 million people in

- ASEAN member states were displaced temporarily by natural disasters and an additional 193 million people were affected by disasters.
- With much of its population living along its 81,000 miles of low-lying coastline, Southeast Asia is arguably one of the regions most at risk from climate change. Flooding in the last several years, for example, in Bangkok, Jakarta and Manila has devastated local economies and halted transportation systems as well as critical industries, even forcing financial markets to close.
  - Without efforts to adapt, ASEAN's urban centers will be among the most vulnerable globally to climate-related disasters.
    - Rapid urbanization brings about an increase in the number of people living in slums and informal settlements, often in risk-prone areas where settlement has been avoided in the past.
  - **Health risks** are also evolving and remain a continuing threat:
    - Promotion of healthy lifestyles and addressing maternal and child nutritional needs are persistently low in many ASEAN member states: 17.7 million children are affected by stunting. On the other hand, an estimated 4.5 million children under five are currently overweight or obese. The incidence of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes translates into a high disease burden, especially in populous countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.
    - Epidemics are also increasingly on our radar, and are often a symptom of underlying weaknesses in the health system and water and sanitation infrastructure, and synonymous with poverty and inequity.
  - **Different segments of our communities also face particular risks.**
    - Youth is one of these. In ASEAN countries, almost half the population is aged under 30 with 26% of the population aged 15-29. Across the region, young people face common challenges, including unemployment, drug abuse and violence, due to insufficient access to education, employment and health care.

## **Resilience from IFRC perspectives**

- Resilience building is the bread and butter of the Red Cross Red Crescent movement. It is the 'integrated programming' approach of communities using their own resources to establish community built water systems in remote locations, it is the work we do jointly with Ministries of Health to encourage blood donation, it is the school safety and youth activities which

are ongoing in almost every ASEAN country right now, as we meet, building capacity of the next generation to be engaged, informed members of peaceful societies.

- **Resilience is not something that can be accomplished alone.** Instead, it requires us to work together in partnerships and coalitions that connect communities, local businesses, government, and civil society. Resilience-building in this sense needs to be inclusive, collaborative and enabling public participation.
- Resilience is also not a separate sector or professional field. Fundamentally it is about **safety, health, and wellbeing** – about **ensuring that our everyday decision-making is risk informed** – about protecting our development, business, and livelihoods investments from relevant risks.

In summary, resilience is an essential approach for ASEAN members as they work to reduce risk and vulnerability and enhance peoples' and communities' capacities to 'bounce back' or even to 'bounce forward' even after a crisis and ensure the continuity of development progress. This is the meaning the One Billion Coalition for Resilience, an initiative launched by the IFRC to enable by 2025 **one billion people** to become more resilient in the face of shocks and adversity

### **How the IFRC can contribute to “Building a disaster-resilient ASEAN”**

- **Let me start with a very small example.** 'Greater Jakarta Resilience' is an ongoing programme led by Indonesia Red Cross with support from American Red Cross, our Climate Centre and a network of partners. One component has been to equip and train a community of fishermen to help familiarize them with online government information about weather and fishing grounds. Complementing traditional knowledge, this small project enabled this community to access weather forecasts for several days ahead and beyond their fishing area, protecting their investments, increasing their catch, and making their community more organised, more knowledgeable, safer and more prosperous.
- “Building a disaster-resilient ASEAN” is an ambitious goal which can be achieved only through the engagement of all stakeholders. The IFRC and its member National Societies are fully committed to this goal. We seek to contribute through the convening power of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement but also through the auxiliary role of our National Societies in

Southeast Asia and the parallel outreach of their volunteers at community level.

- The IFRC and ASEAN secretariat have developed constructive collaboration over the past decade. This collaboration has been built mainly within the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC).

In the folder in front of you, you will see a two-pager outlining the key pillars and shared goals under our current joint strategy. These are:

- 1) Disaster management,
- 2) Health and Care, and
- 3) Youth Engagement.

Protection, Gender and Inclusion, and migration are also included as cross cutting issues.

I would like to speak briefly on each of these pillars.

- The **first pillar is disaster risk management**, a critical area of collaboration and a core mandate for the IFRC. In 2017, the IFRC and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the ASEAN region invested CHF 29 million in disaster risk reduction and **reached 5.5 million people**. Through our active advocacy and community engagement, we commit to support more people in the region by scaling the RCRC work for resilience and increasing our investment.

One successful example of Red Cross Red Crescent contribution has been the Regional Resilience Initiative that will be finalised this year. This initiative covered all the ASEAN countries plus Timor Leste and contributed to implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER).

The IFRC has also been developing a unique expertise in disaster law over the past two decades. In the ASEAN region, we have worked with governments to establish new legislative instruments, review and strengthen existing ones and help support a peer to peer learning. Last year, with the endorsement of ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) and in partnership with ASEAN Secretariat, we completed the first mapping of disaster law and the institutionalization of AADMER into national laws. We intend to build on this work and continue with local partnerships to support the establishment of strong inclusive and gender sensitive disaster laws in the ASEAN region.

Our collaboration has also increased in areas such as civil-military relations in disaster response, not to mention a wide range of collaboration in establishing disaster management standards, training staff, develop surge capacities across ASEAN region and fostering a culture of prevention.

- The **second pillar** is **health**. Many people do not think of the Red Cross Red Crescent as one of the most prominent health operators, especially at local level. However, every year we are training almost 1.5 million people in first aid, developing advanced capabilities in community health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles. The Red Cross Red Crescent also stands as a prominent and reliable partner for any measures aiming to prevent or mitigate epidemics such as dengue.
- Our **third and last pillar** is **youth**. More than 50% of the 2 million active volunteers in Southeast Asia are young people. This region has been remarkably active in mobilizing youth networks, to enable youth to be agents of change, both in promoting school safety and standing as champions for safety, health, and wellbeing in their own families and communities.
- Cutting across these three pillars, we include important efforts on **protection, gender and inclusion**. In-depth research on Sexual and Gender-Base Violence have been conducted in three countries (Indonesia, Laos, and Philippines) to better advocate for policy development to prevent violence against the most vulnerable and protect children, adolescents, women and men from being exploited, abused or violated during disasters. These research outcomes will be shared in a workshop in one month.

Our achievements to date would not have had this dynamic influence and reach without the contribution of the volunteers and staff of the 11 Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies. Together with these National Societies, we have established new partnerships and strengthened existing ones, especially with the government agencies and the local authorities, with the ASEAN Secretariat and the AHA Centre, with UN Women, UNISDR, UNFPA, OCHA and the rest of the UN family as well as the private sector.

- In a statement issued on ASEAN's 50th anniversary, ASEAN recognized the unique role and service of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in humanitarian endeavours, which is in line with the vision of "One ASEAN, One Response" of building a safer and disaster-resilient region through a united and synergistic approach among ASEAN Member States and various stakeholders.

- The ASEAN Secretariat and the IFRC are planning to soon sign a Memorandum of Understanding with a common commitment to go to the next step in building a resilient ASEAN region. Our target will be to mobilise over 100 million people under the ASEAN Coalition for Resilience which will support and expand resilience activities, as a contribution to the One Billion Coalition for Resilience.

Building a resilient ASEAN Region is a collective responsibility in which the Red Cross Red Crescent network is committed to contribute where we can add value the most and by leveraging the power of partnerships and focus on shared and tangible outcomes. This commitment is also a contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals through effective building of a cohesive, safer and healthier, and thriving ASEAN community.

Thank you for being part of this discussion today, and I look forward to engaging with you and learning from you how we can strengthen partnerships and further harness the power of innovation to reduce vulnerability and improve people's wellbeing across the ASEAN region.