



International Civil Aviation Organization

**Fourth Meeting of the Asia/Pacific Regional Search and Rescue Task Force
(APSAR/TF/4)**

Bangkok, Thailand, 06 – 10 July 2015

Agenda Item 7: Any Other Business

ASIA/PACIFIC REGIONAL SAR FORUMS

(Presented by the United States of America)

SUMMARY

This paper provides an overview of some of the forums within the Asia/Pacific region which are currently discussing SAR matters and should be read in conjunction with APSAR/TF/4/WP14. Asia/Pacific States are encouraged to present their views to these forums and to consider these forums as a means to support the ICAO Bangkok Regional Office SAR activities.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Awareness of Search and Rescue (SAR) matters within the Asia/Pacific Region continues to grow. An overview is provided below regarding some of the recurring regional forums which have SAR on their agenda. With limited resources at the ICAO Bangkok Regional Office, States may consider forums such as these as ways to address their SAR concerns as well as to provide support for and to sustain progress on the ICAO Bangkok Regional Office SAR activities.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The Asia/Pacific SAR Task Force continues to make good progress on behalf of the entire Asia/Pacific community but thought must also be given to sustaining this progress for the long term. Close collaboration with other Asia/Pacific forums may enable the ICAO Asia/Pacific SAR Task Force to have an enduring legacy. Asia/Pacific forums currently handling SAR matters include:

- a) Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN): In 2014 this ten nation group was completing its draft comprehensive aeronautical and maritime SAR agreement.
- b) ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF): A total of 27 nations including the ten ASEAN nations. Various groups under the ARF meet on a regular basis. The group currently focused on SAR is composed mainly of ministry of foreign affairs specialists and subject matter experts for topics presented. The 2014 session developed the attached “The ASEAN Regional Forum Statement on Strengthening Coordination and Cooperation on Maritime and Aeronautical Search and Rescue” (**Attachment A**).

Web site: <http://aseanregionalforum.asean.org/>

- c) Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC): A regional intergovernmental organization whose membership includes both nations and territories in the Pacific Ocean. It is in the final stages of completing a regional SAR agreement/arrangement). Its ongoing SAR discussions seek to include aeronautical SAR authorities. Web site: www.spc.int/
- d) Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP): CSCAP, composed of academia and prior government experts, serves as a ‘think tank’ for the ARF. (The ARF recently expanded its work plan to include SAR and response to disasters.) The main Council is supported by chapters from several States. One chapter will take the lead to convene a study group (SG) comprised of members from other chapters as well as invited experts to address a particular topic. The goal of the SG is to develop the way forward for ARF to continue action. Malaysia and India co-chaired the “First Meeting of the CSCAP Study Group on Harmonization of Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR)” in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 18-20 June 2015. This Study Group initiative will be discussed in more detail in the next paragraph.

Web site: <http://www.cscap.org/>

2.2 The “First Meeting of the CSCAP Study Group on Harmonization of Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR)” might be able to support SAR in two key ways: (1) provide the ASEAN Regional Forum with a clear focus to work on SAR; and, (2) provide another means of implementing the outputs from the ICAO Bangkok Asia/Pacific SAR Task Force. The CSCAP Study Group itself does not conduct the work or hold the meetings, rather, it develop a plan or outlines workshops for other States to implement. Study Group 1 ended in a very positive way and is planning its second session in Delhi, India with a date to be determined. CSCAP already recognizes the foundation for its effort is the ASEAN SAR statement written by the ARF in 2014; however, the APSAR Task Force Regional SAR Plan could be the next critical piece. The Regional SAR Plan could provide solid topics for discussion and/or workshops to be held at the ASEAN Regional Forum meetings and other venues.

2.3 All States have difficulty in attending the numerous meetings held throughout the region and globally, often because of cost and also limited number of staff. When not able to directly participate, States should consider having their views heard by means of submitting papers or having another State or organization carry their message forward. Another means is to participate in an email correspondence group which might be established to exchange views (and resolve differences) in between sessions. Meeting reports are typically available from web sites of these forums.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) note the information provided on representative regional forums which are discussing SAR, and in particular, the recent initiative under the CSCAP; and,
- b) encourage Asia/Pacific States to make their SAR views known to these forums either by direct participation or by submitting inputs to these meetings or associated email correspondence groups, if established.

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The ASEAN Regional Forum Statement on Strengthening Coordination and Cooperation on Maritime and Aeronautical Search and Rescue

2014/08/11

The chairman of ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), on behalf of its participants, issued the following statement:

Expressing sympathies to the families of those on the missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 in March 2014 and the victims on the car ferry Sewol of the Republic of Korea in April 2014, and extending appreciation for the search and rescue (SAR) efforts by the participating nations in the above-mentioned incidents,

Realizing that incidents at sea and in the air pose a risk to human lives and property in the region,

Recalling the efforts ARF has made in promoting maritime and aeronautical SAR coordination and cooperation among its participants,

Recognizing the importance of the provisions on international maritime and aeronautical SAR in the Convention on International Civil Aviation and its Annex 12 on Search and Rescue, the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS 1974/88), the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR 1979), the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS 1982), the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual (IAMSAR Manual), as well as the provisions in the Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGs 1972),

Realizing that the effectiveness and efficiency of regional SAR capacity and cooperation needs to be further enhanced,

Calling for regional countries to further strengthen SAR coordination and cooperation at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels, including through dialogue and cooperation in ARF,

ARF participants reiterate the importance of the following statements, among others, in regional coordination and cooperation on maritime and aeronautical SAR:

- Saving lives should be the top priority and SAR services should be provided in a prompt and appropriate manner,
- Assistance should be provided to any person in distress at sea regardless of the nationality, status of the person, or circumstances in which that person is found,
- Unless otherwise arranged, ARF participants should bear their own costs for the conduct of SAR operations,
- Maritime and aeronautical SAR cooperation under the framework of the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, and the Convention on International Civil Aviation should be promoted to enhance and support the capacity of regional countries, and promote a confidence building process, and can augment the regional ARF disaster relief cooperation,

ARF participants should endeavor to take the following measures to strengthen regional cooperation on maritime and aeronautical SAR:

- Encourage active participation in SAR operations for major maritime and aeronautical incidents in the region and the support for efficient and effective search and rescue operations in case of request or agreement by a related state, in accordance with international law, and respecting relevant national laws,
- Work together in establishing advanced SAR capability among participants, through information sharing, exchange of best practices and capacity building, including exchange of professional and advanced technologies and equipment,
- Promote workshops and consultations on SAR cooperation, including existing regional table-top and field training SAR exercises,

-Consistent with existing provisions of cooperation identified in relevant conventions and other instruments, take appropriate measures to strengthen communication and coordination among national Rescue Coordination Centers (RCCs),

-Encourage further discussion of military and civilian SAR coordination and cooperation on information sharing and SAR operations, including within the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), both at national and regional levels,

-Build the region's recognition of existing mechanisms and commitments including the Convention on International Civil Aviation, the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue and other relevant international arrangements, better utilize existing regional SAR coordination centres, and explore more effective and efficient modalities of SAR cooperation and coordination in the Asia Pacific,

-Support the work on continuous improvement of the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual and SAR practices in the region, consistent with the Convention on International Civil Aviation and its Annex 12 on Search and Rescue as well as the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue,

-Consider taking additional measures, if necessary, as appropriate to enhance the implementation by all ARF participants of the Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS) and other relevant international instruments in an effort to observe good seamanship at sea and minimize incidents that result in SAR efforts.