

**Regional Resilience Initiative (RRI)
Lessons Learned Workshop
21-23 February 2018, Novotel Sukhumvit 20, Bangkok**

Opening remarks by H.E. Ambassador Marie-Louise Hannan
Ambassador of Canada to ASEAN

- Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Government of Canada, a very warm welcome to this Lessons Learned Workshop.

- I would like to begin by thanking the IFRC and the Canadian Red Cross for partnering with the Government of Canada to implement the Regional Resilience Initiative over the last four years.

- I think this initiative has allowed for an innovative partnership that brought a diverse set of players together: on the one hand, the IFRC and the Canadian Red Cross, who provided technical and financial support; and on the other, the 11 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Southeast Asia, who led the implementation of activities together with governments.

- This is an important event as it provides us with the opportunity to reflect on our collective achievements over the past four years, while at the same time, allows us to examine what has worked well, and what could be improved.
- It is also a great occasion to continue our journey of joint learning as we all share a common interest in building safe and resilient communities throughout Southeast Asia.
- As we know all too well, Southeast Asia has experienced some of the most devastating natural disasters in the world. Over the last 3 decades, over 400,000 have died and the lives and livelihoods of more than 386 million people have been affected. This has resulted in approximately \$120 billion in direct physical losses in the ASEAN region.
- All too often, women and girls, people living with disability, ethnic minorities, or people on the move are the ones who are more at risk because of various social

factors which do not allow them to develop their full coping capacities.

- As we all know, disasters can wipe out decades of gains in development work. At the same time, reducing disaster risks can save and protect investments.
- This is why global leaders, in setting the 2030 Agenda, have recognized the link between disaster resilience and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Likewise, learning from devastating events such as the 2004 Tsunami, Cyclone Nargis in 2008 or, more recently, Cyclone Haiyan in 2013, ASEAN Leaders have prioritized the reduction of risks through solid commitments, as embodied in the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, or AADMER, to which this initiative is contributing.
- Canada takes a comprehensive approach to disaster risk reduction and resilience building. We recognize that mitigating risks and reducing vulnerabilities is far more effective than responding after the fact.

- In line with our commitments under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Canada is investing in global and regional efforts to strengthen resilience to disasters with its partners such as the UN, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and the Global Environment Facility.
- That is why Canada will advocate for humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law, including by shining a light on the ways in which humanitarian crises present unique challenges for women and girls.
- Canada is also committed to strengthening sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response strategies in humanitarian settings.
- I think one of the key successes of the Regional Resilience Initiative is its ability to create awareness and understanding for the unique challenges often faced by women, girls, and other vulnerable groups during humanitarian crises. This has been done through such activities as the joint research with ASEAN on sexual and

gender-based violence prevention and response before, during and after disasters.

- What has also been impressive is the success that the Initiative has had in mainstreaming Gender and Diversity into regional, national and local DRR policies, strategies and tools. This is true not only within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, but also with governments and regional partners such as ASEAN.
- Of course, I would be remiss if I didn't mention some of the other achievements of this initiative. I will just highlight two of them:
 - The first is the promotion of peer to peer learning among National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Southeast Asia with Governments, ASEAN and other regional partners.
 - This second is how this initiative has led to the strengthening of the IFRC strategic and technical engagement with ASEAN, in particular with the ASEAN

Committee on Disaster Management, to build a more resilient and people-centred ASEAN community.

- This strengthened collaboration has culminated in the acknowledgement by ASEAN, at the Summit last November, of the important contributions made by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in providing protection and humanitarian assistance to people and countries in the region affected by disasters in the spirit and vision of One ASEAN, One Response.
- Through these successes, the Regional Resilience Initiative has become a platform for policy-makers and program managers to cooperate in reducing disaster risks and enhancing community resilience.
- Given the humanitarian challenges faced by the region, the existing partnership under the Regional Resilience Initiative - with the Canadian Red Cross, the IFRC and the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies - is well positioned to continue to build on this initiative and play a critical role in building community resilience.

- The National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have a far-reaching and widespread network of branches, youth and volunteers. The regional peer networks created over time as well as the strong partnerships with governments and regional partners are also key elements of sustainability for the initiative.
- You may ask “why is Canada involved in disaster recovery in Southeast Asia? What’s in it for Canada?” First, it is clearly in Canada’s national interest to see that communities in Southeast Asia are prepared for disasters. When communities are prepared, they recover quickly.
- When they are not, disasters in Southeast Asia can quickly turn into economic shocks, epidemics, social strife, and other problems that affect us even on our shores in Canada. We’re also invested here, through our development assistance and economically, and ASEAN resilience to disasters is to everyone’s benefit.

- The second reason we're involved is because Canada cares. Millions of Canadians have deep personal connections with Southeast Asia - they have family here, they have commercial ties, or they have visited the region. In the interconnected 21st century, both sides of the Pacific really aren't as far away from each other as they used to seem.
- Canadians expect their government to minimize the effect of natural disasters in Southeast Asia, and we know that the best way to do that is through long-term, meaningful partnerships, like with ASEAN, the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Southeast Asia, communities, governments from various levels, and civil society.
- We are therefore very pleased to support this workshop as it builds bridges between communities and promotes a culture of learning within the region.

- In this spirit, I am delighted to declare this Lessons Learned Workshop officially open, and wish you a productive and fruitful workshop.
- Thank you.