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## SUMMARY MEETING MINUTES

### The 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Southeast Asia Red Cross Red Crescent Leadership Meeting

16- 17 September 2021

#### Day 1: 16 September 2021

#### OPENING SESSION:

##### 1. Chairperson of the meeting

Mr. Tej Bunnag, Secretary General, Thai Red Cross Society

##### 2. Honorable guests

Mr. Francesco Rocca, President, the IFRC

Mr. Robert Mardini, Director General, the ICRC

##### 3. Leaders of National Societies in South East Asia

Mr. Haji Muhammad Suhaimi Haji Ibrahim, President, Brunei Red Crescent Society

Ms. Chantinie Pum, Secretary General, Cambodia Red Cross

Mr. Sudirman Said, Secretary General, Indonesian Red Cross

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Phouthone Muongpak, President, Lao Red Cross

Her Highness Dato' Seri DiRaja Tan Sri (Dr.) Tunku Puteri Intan Safinaz Binti

Almarhum Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah, National Chairperson,

Malaysia Red Crescent Society

Prof. Dr Htin Zaw Soe, Secretary General, Myanmar Red Cross Society

Mr. Richard J. Gordon, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Philippine Red Cross

Mr. Benjamin William, Secretary General and CEO, Singapore Red Cross

Mr. Estanislau Vicente de Jesus Guterres, Secretary General, Timor-Leste Red Cross

Mr. Nguen Hai Anh, Vice President cum Secretary General,

Viet Nam Red Cross Society

##### 4. Colleagues of the IFRC and ICRC Headquarters and Regional Offices

Mr. Alexander Matheou, Regional Director for Asia Pacific, IFRC

Ms. Kathryn Clarkson, Head of Delegation, Country Cluster for Thailand, Cambodia,  
Laos and Viet Nam, IFRC



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Ms. Christine Cipolla, Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, ICRC

Mr Christoph Sutter, Regional Head of Delegation, ICRC

Ms. Catherine Martin, Supra Regional Movement Cooperation Coordinator

Ms. Elmira Ablekeeva, Head of Sector for Asia Pacific based in Geneva

## **5. OPENING REMARKS AND KEYNOTE SPEECHES:**

The chair opened by remarking that the COVID-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented global challenge, inflicting hardship on millions around the world. This hardship came on top of the long-term trend of climate change which are also impacting the most vulnerable. The twin disasters share the same root cause of human encroachment on mother nature. International solidarity and global investment are prerequisites to reducing risks and averting disasters. It's imperative to continue strengthening the Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies of Southeast Asia for sustainable recovery and enhancing their cooperation to promote the effectiveness in responding to crises.

The IFRC President welcomed the continuation of meetings among the National Societies, very important for dialogues especially during the pandemic situation, as well as the dialogues with Youth network, which are important as an investment not only in today but also for the future. The President urged SEA NS to discuss ways and means to build back better, and the role that they can continue to play in the society, which is rapidly changing, emphasizing that adaptation is key. He also commended tireless volunteer efforts during the pandemic, and called for a continued support for volunteer safety, especially to alleviate fatigue and support mental health. The President also underscored the urgency of addressing the climate crisis which added onto other on-going humanitarian crises, and called for a broad-based support to address this problem.

The ICRC Director General concurred that COVID-19 added another layer of vulnerability on top of climate change and natural disasters. He commended the leading role that Southeast Asian National Societies play in humanitarian responses, which is widely appreciated and acknowledged. He encouraged the societies to consider how to enhance the Movement's collective impact by coordinating with each other, especially in resource mobilization, to enhance collective humanitarian impact.



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## **MAIN WORKING SESSIONS**

### **Session 1: Facing the Challenges of COVID-19, Responding to, and Recovering from the Pandemic**

#### **1.1 Lessons and Opportunities on COVID-19 Response and Vaccination Activities**

##### **(i) Update on the Progress of the Centre of Excellence for Pandemic Preparedness**

The Centre focused on building community preparedness for current and future pandemics. Training is key, with many modules already carried out and in progress, including; Introduction to infectious diseases, WASH in pandemics, Psychosocial support in pandemics and biosecurity. The Centre has also conducted sharing sessions with 6 National Societies on COVID-19 operations. 2021 activities shifted to response rather than preparedness (by request) making use of 8.5 mil SD (6 mil CHF). The Centre's future work includes building a shared IT platform and leadership sessions, aiming for an in-person meeting in 2022.

##### **(ii) Open discussions on the experiences, challenges, and lessons learned from the COVID - 19 pandemic**

All societies updated on their progress supporting their Government's COVID-19 operation in the last year, including more recently with the vaccination roll-out. Societies have been doing extraordinary work to scale-up in response to COVID-19, and highlighted the work of volunteers and particularly the importance of ensuring safety of volunteers. Further details of the updates can be found in the presentations.

#### **Presentation by Prof. Kiat Ruxrungtham, M.D., Chula Vaccine Research Center ChulaVR – Chulalongkorn University**

The Professor presented on the progress of the ChulaCov-19 vaccine development. Although the team at Chulalongkorn is about 1 year behind in vaccine development, it is of great importance to continue home grown efforts, which will pay off in capacity building especially in advance manufacturing capacity as well as technological development to support the region. Early results are extremely promising to show that ChulaCov19 can neutralize all 4 main variants (alpha, beta, gamma, delta), and its efficacy is comparable to the Pfizer vaccine with greater ease of use and



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storage. The next phase is to finalize the human trials and look to commercialize production to scale by the end of Q1 2022. Possibilities exist for the vaccine to be used within the region.

## **1.2 Reimagining Our Future: Building Back Better from COVID-19**

The IFRC Regional Director presented that though there has been a historical effort in global vaccine development roll out, the pandemic is far from over. More than 20% of global citizens still choose not to be vaccinated, or face some form of social exclusion. He highlighted four key lessons learned:

- ☐ It is imperative to monitor vulnerable groups being left behind.
- ☐ Although the world still experienced some vaccine shortages, in the near future it is expected that India and China will be able to release more supplies, plus newer vaccine development from other countries such as Thailand.
- ☐ New epidemic waves are unavoidable; hopefully they will not be as deadly as in the past now that vaccines have gradually been applied. But the public will have compliance fatigue, which could affect policy effectiveness.
- ☐ It is imperative to look ahead and implement a “No regret investment” policy to stock up on oxygen and essential equipment.

ICRC Regional Director also commented on the importance of system resilience based on four factors:

- ☐ Robustness – to prevent disruption, it is important for the National Societies to cultivate long-term relationship with central and local authorities so that all stakeholders can work together well in crisis situation.
- ☐ Capacity to channel efforts to match expertise, so as to avoid duplication and increase efficiency
- ☐ Rapidity and flexibility of deployment
- ☐ Adaptability and Transformability of the organization. Digitalization has also been key to success, but privacy must also be protected.

Societies highlighted the importance of building community resilience to multiple shocks and that they need to be flexible, adaptable and forward looking.



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## Session 2: Strengthening National Societies for Sustainability

### 2.1 Stepping Up Our Fundraising

The IFRC Head of Delegation, Bangkok emphasized that the future of financing is not just about attracting more resources, but also leadership, coordination, and whole-of-society approach. The way forward is to diversify partnership and seek more innovative models for financing that are suitable for each society. It is also important to recognize that some income strain is more sustainable than others, and thus distinguish between short-term and long-term focuses. Peer support mechanism from other National Societies is also important and should be further explored.

Thailand RC representative presented on **new initiatives originated during the pandemic** because the ability to organize physical events is now limited, fund raising has become competitive, and people have less disposable income to donate. Initiatives such as:

- ☐ Use Facebook or other social media platforms to reach out more widely; organize online or hybrid events; be innovative in making activities interesting and fun.
- ☐ Online crowd-funding platform [www.sookjaidaiboon.com](http://www.sookjaidaiboon.com) uses storytelling to motivate donors and provide easy-to-use donation channels
- ☐ Data gathered online are valuable for analyses of donor landscape
- ☐ Communication and content strategy is one of the key success factors for new normal fundraising

Societies confirmed the importance of digital platforms for fundraising under COVID-19.

### Updates on the progress of the Asia Pacific Fund Raising (APFN) Network and SEA network

APFN have 3 key initiatives: knowledge sharing and communication, peer to peer support, webinars and skill-share/leadership-building meetings. All are aimed at capacity building. Singapore RC presented on their workshop in 2020 and emphasize the need to build strong peer to peer support and recommended to compile “The Yellow Pages of fund raising”, a list of companies and organizations on the funding network. To make this initiative work, we must maintain reputation that NS work together well, channeling funds to good cause, to attract others and expand network.



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## 2.2 Mobilizing Youth and Volunteers

The Southeast Asia Youth network chair presented their Action plan for 2021-2022:

- ☐ maintain and strengthen the 4 working groups established since August 2020;
- ☐ readjust activities based on feedback from members
- ☐ reaffirm national societies interests in joining working groups.
  - Activities of Youth Education WG (“Youth as Leaders”)
  - Activities of Youth Engagement Working Group (Enabling Environment), including peer-to-peer support and exchange of best practices, creating a common database to collect youth policies and strategies.
  - Activities of Knowledge Sharing Working Group
  - Activities of Youth Engagement in Blood Donation, Digitalization, Innovation responding to COVID-19 Challenges
  - Calls for proposals on Climate Volunteer Engagement Initiative
  - Activities of Communication Working Group

Societies commented on the impressive presentation from the Youth network and the clear recommendations. They recognized that during the past two years with COVID-19 pandemic, it is a big challenge for SEAYN, on the one hand to manage their development work responding to priorities, and on the other hand, to cope with the life-threatening disease outbreak to protect themselves and families as well as to continue their volunteer work to help the people and community members, especially the vulnerable.

Societies committed to fully support SEAYN in terms of policies, resources and capacity strengthening and engagement in key thematic areas as well as leadership development.

The chair commented that leaders will support the Network to ensure youth engagements and empowerments are effectively promoted at all levels and SEAYN can enrich its last long and unstoppable humanitarian actions.

## WRAP-UP OF THE DAY AND CONCLUSION

The chair noted the national society efforts to emphasize the importance of assisting the vulnerable, particularly directed to help people with difficulties getting access to healthcare facilities such as the disabled, the elderly, those with severe diseases. He noted attention has also been paid to the mental health and psychosocial impact of the pandemic – people becoming unemployed, adding to stresses and psychological pressure. All NS emphasize considerable efforts of volunteers not only in the health professions but also throughout the society e.g. food delivery and coordination of





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transportation. A number of NS successfully contribute to epidemic control by concentrating on testing intensively and widely, while other highlighted the role of technology and home-grown initiatives/adaptation to situation in response to various aspects of the hardship, for example the Thai Red Cross Society “phonpai” disaster response application. We need to continue to enhance capacity of National societies, which will lead to greater collective strength. This pandemic has taught us about “No regret investment” for production capacity and stock of necessary equipment. Had we known the COVAX facility will be slower than expected, we would have made more and faster procurement of vaccines and oxygen supply. There are moments in a country’s history experiencing acute crisis. If the RC do something at the crucial time, it will be remembered for a long time for support. “What do we want to be remembered for after this crisis?” Because it’s not over yet, we still have time to do something to be remembered for. Some countries have emphasized forward thinking in post-pandemic recovery plan, and the need to adopt digitalization and technology.

On stepping-up fund raising, the future of financing is not just about attracting more resources, but also leadership, coordination, and whole-of-society approach. The way forward is to diversify partnership and seek more innovative models for financing that are suitable for each society. New initiatives originated during the pandemic because the opportunity to organize physical events is limited, fund raising has become competitive, and people have less disposable income to donate. Use Facebook or other social media platforms to reach out more widely; organize online or hybrid events; be innovative in making activities interesting and fun.

On Mobilizing Youth and Volunteers our Youth representatives have made an impressive and highly relevant presentation on their activities ranging from strengthening leadership through workshops and education, strengthening peer-to-peer support, knowledge sharing and exchanges of best practices, increasing engagement through Youth Network Facebook pages to broaden membership and our Youth representatives emphasized the benefit of continued engagement with the National Societies across a wide range of activities. We highly commend their creativity and resourcefulness. Hearing our Youth’s voices has galvanized the National Societies’ resolve to work even harder to strengthen our cooperation and support for the Youth network to work together for their future.



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**Day 2: 17 September 2021**

### **OPENING SESSION:**

#### **Dialogue with Mr. Jagan Chapagain, Secretary General, IFRC**

The IFRC Secretary General appreciated “the courage of leadership” demonstrated by the societies in Southeast Asia over the last 18 months and particularly at the moment, at the heart of the pandemic. He emphasized the importance of scaling up our work by stepping up fund raising, improving efficiency, and encouraging digitalization and innovation. He appealed to societies to support the IFRC’s Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) pledging conference planned for October.

### **MAIN WORKING SESSIONS**

#### **Session 1: Review the Progress of Hanoi Statement**

The Viet Nam Secretary General presented on the progress since the Hanoi Statement, in the three major areas: 1) COVID -19 pandemic, 2) Manila Call for Action progress, and 3) Progress of our networks. (the network progress will be reported directly from the network Chairs in the following session). Although the pandemic complicated our efforts, National Societies are at the forefront of humanitarian work with many good practices, including support to safety and protection of volunteers, support to COVID -19 testing and vaccine roll-out, distribution of PPE as well as the use of social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as tools for humanitarian communication. The Secretary General also highlighted areas still requiring attention, including women’s leadership (only 20% of Southeast Asia societies governance are women), compliance (policies such as Fraud and Corruption prevention and Sexual-exploitation and abuse) and youth and volunteering. While there has been some progress, significant resources are required in order to progress this work.

Societies must be better prepared to respond to the increasing numbers of climate disasters, now and after COVID -19. The needs of migrants, refugees and displaced people are increasingly being identified and addressed by NSs. Cash programming is increasingly supporting localized responses and providing greater dignity for impacted populations.





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## **Session 2: Follow-up on Movement, regional and global commitments**

The session refreshed the commitments from the 10th Asia Pacific Regional Conference hosted by the Philippine Red Cross in November 2018 and the areas committed to under the Southeast Asia roadmap including Strengthening National Societies to maximize their potential (Localization); Disaster risk management (Fast - Changing World); Humanitarian diplomacy (Engaging).

The presentation highlighted progress of societies against the Manila Call for Action targets, based on data the societies had submitted earlier in 2021. Southeast Asia has made good progress against many of the targets, particularly linked to the pandemic, however further work is required on 4 key targets that are behind including women in Leadership, compliance, youth and volunteering and protection, gender and inclusion.

The presentation also touched on the global commitments with which societies are required to comply, including the revision of national society statutes in accordance with the new guidance document. A few recommendations were included for societies to consider in the next year to address these commitments that are falling behind. The Malaysian Red Crescent Society updated on progress in achieving compliance with completing the review of their constitution. Thai Red Cross Society paid tribute to all RCRC volunteers and committed to ensure protection for safety as well as physically and psychologically well-being of all volunteer and staff, as well as integrating innovation and technology into work practices and culture for volunteerism.

## **Session 3: Updates on the Works of the SEA Networks:**

### **3.1 The Revival of the Southeast Asia Disaster Response Network and Regional Network of Responders**

The presentation drew attention to the history of discussions on this topic at the leaders meeting and the need to work closer together. A concept note will be shared on this topic for consideration at the next leaders meeting in 2022.



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### **3.2 Community Safety and Resilience Forum (CSR)**

The IFRC noted that the Forum has been struggling since the members cannot meet face-to-face, however, this area is still one of SEA NSs main focuses. The IFRC advised the leaders to consider recommendations written in IFRC report, including suggestions for each NS to nominate dedicated focal points for the Forum, and for the Forum to coordinate via online platforms. Malaysian Red Crescent Society and Viet Nam Red Cross Society, co-chairs of the Forum, noted the IFRC's recommendations and will discuss further on how to move forward.

### **3.3 Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI) Network**

The network chair presented that a number of individual societies had made progress in this area in 2021, including online meetings and trainings on PGI and the COVID - 19 pandemic. In 2022, the Network aims to seek funds for future on-site meetings while continue organizing online meetings, and seeks the leaders support. The Network also requested commitments on PGI focal points, appoint the Network chair and support PGI focal points in prioritizing PGI into NS future response plans.

### **3.4 Asia Pacific Migration Network (APFN)**

The network co-chair highlighted a number of achievements of the network including a Guidance on Conducting a Migration and Displacement Needs Assessment for Asia Pacific NSs. The network also attended the review on the global compact on safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration. The Network called on the SEA NSs leaders to continue supporting the Network by appointing NSs focal points, and supporting them in joining the network activities and implementing learnings into their works.

### **3.5 Asian Red Cross and Red Crescent HIV/AIDS Network (ART)**

The network chair highlighted the progress of the network including HIV/AIDS event and integration of COVID - 19 response. The network recommended moving to digital platform, selection of the new Network Chairperson as well as promoting the culture of “New Normal Living with COVID - 19”.



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#### **Session 4: Statutory meetings**

The IFRC Regional Director gave a summary overview of the statutory meetings in 2022, including the IFRC General Assembly (date TBC, possibly first half of 2022). He highlighted that the meetings would include the election of the IFRC Governing Board, if societies have an interest to nominate candidates, noting the new constitutional requirement for gender balance. For the Council of Delegates, the agenda items and draft resolutions will be published for consultation by the end of September, including a new action plan on elimination of nuclear weapons, Climate and Environment Charter, Movement action plan on War in Cities, Movement-wide Strategy on Migration, Strengthening Anticipatory Humanitarian Action, Patient Quality and Safety Initiative and Urban resilience.

#### **Session 5: Cooperation with ASEAN Secretariat and AHA Center**

The Deputy Commissioner of the Singapore Civil Defense Force on behalf of the Chair of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM), remarked that ACDM's work in the region intertwines with the work of the RCRC Movement. ASEAN recognizes the vital role of the RCRC Movement in alleviating people's suffering in manmade and natural disasters as well as the contribution of volunteers. IFRC has strategic engagement with ASEAN. This year, the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) Work Programme 2021 - 2025 has begun.

The Assistant Director/Head of Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance Division, the ASEAN Secretariat, mentioned the framework for cooperation and past and current collaboration between IFRC, SEA National Societies and ASEAN. Framework for cooperation includes ASEAN Statement on the Engagement with Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies adopted at the 31st ASEAN Summit in Manila in November 2017, and Memorandum of Understanding between ASEAN and IFRC expected to be endorsed in 2021. The MoU has eight major topics - disaster management, disaster risk reduction, disaster law, health in emergencies, disaster relief and emergency response, gender, youth and climate change. Cooperation with ASEAN Secretariat involves the implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) Work Programme 2016-2020: ASEAN Schools Safety Initiatives (ASSI) and the development and implementation of the AADMER Work Programme 2021-2025: TWG-PGI, SGBV Study.



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The Resource Mobilisation Manager, AHA Center, spoke about cooperation between the RCRC Movement and AHA Center. The final version of Joint Action Plan between AHA Center and IFRC was agreed by IFRC and AHA Center in September 2019. The main objective is to enhance RCRC contribution to the goal of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER). Three collaborative areas are information sharing, operational response framework, and learning from each other. AHA Center has room for improvement for more engagement with national societies, more cooperation in implementation of projects and activities, and better cooperation especially during emergency response beyond sharing of information. The national society leaders all strongly emphasized to ASEAN that the agreement with the IFRC secretariat had been pending for some time now and they expected it to be progressed this year. Myanmar Red Cross Society also expressed appreciation to ASEAN for its support for Myanmar Red Cross Society's COVID - 19 response.

<p><b>Session 6: Drafting and adoption of Statement of the 18th Annual SEA RCRC Leadership Meeting</b></p>
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The draft statement was presented and a few additional inclusions were presented and approved. The draft statement was endorsed by all leaders, who agreed to sign the statement electronically following the meeting.

## **CLOSING CEREMONY**

Mr. Tej Bunnag, Secretary General of Thai Red Cross Society, brought the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Southeast Asian Red Cross Red Crescent Leadership Meeting to its conclusion. He noted that all the participants had extensive and fruitful discussions on many issues of common interest over the past two days, especially on COVID - 19 response and recovery, strengthening the National Societies for sustainability, and work of SEA networks. Also, they reached some concrete outcome which will provide direction for each National Society to pursue. He thanked all parties concerned and handed over the chairmanship to Brunei Darussalam Red Crescent Society.

Mr. Haji Muhammad Suhaimi Haji Ibrahim, President of Brunei Darussalam Red Crescent Society, congratulated TRCS for excellent work in organizing the meeting to enhance solidarity and humanity. He expressed appreciation to the opportunity to welcome everyone to Brunei Darussalam for the 19<sup>th</sup> SEA RCRC Leadership Meeting in 2022.