



## **1st Meeting of the CSCAP Study Group on Harmonization of Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR)**

Intercontinental Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
19-20 June 2015

### **Co-Chairs' Report**

#### **Introduction**

1. The first meeting of the CSCAP Study Group was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 19-20 June 2015 with Malaysia and India as Co-Chairs. The meeting was attended by 30 participants from Australia, China, India, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Singapore, United States, Viet Nam, and a Subject Matter Expert (SME) from Chinese Taipei. Representatives from various think-tanks and SAR-related agencies from the United States, Malaysia, Singapore and People's Republic of China were also present. The Chairman of the *ICAO-IMO Joint Working Group on Harmonisation of SAR* participated to provide the overarching framework on harmonisation and to guide the Study Group in complementing other efforts on strengthening SAR cooperation and coordination.
2. The next meeting is scheduled to be held in India this year and will build on the findings of the first meeting. The following is a summary of the proceedings.

#### **Session 1: Overview on Global SAR Plan and IAMSAR Manual**

3. International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) manuals call for a *Global SAR Plan* established under the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Convention on Civil Aviation (1944) Annex 12 (SAR) and the International Maritime Organisation SAR Convention 1978. However, a number of states in the region are either yet to ratify both Conventions or develop responsive National SAR Systems taking into account the requirements of IAMSAR and the need towards a Global SAR Plan.
4. Recent global and regional aviation and maritime incidents call for enhancement and coordination in aeronautical and maritime SAR responses. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) issued a Statement in 2014 calling for the strengthening of coordination and cooperation in aeronautical and maritime SAR. A CSCAP Study Group on harmonization of aeronautical and maritime SAR was established in 2015 to identify and deliberate on specific areas for states to harmonise SAR in order to strengthen internal and external cooperation and coordination in Aeronautical and Maritime SAR. While studying this, it was also borne on mind that the ensuing effectiveness and efficiency of a regional SAR may also contribute to effectively responding to complex regional scenarios such as mass rescue and Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief (HA/DR).

#### **Session 2 – Approaches to Harmonise Aeronautical and Maritime SAR**

5. The ICAO-IMO Joint Working Group (JWG) on Harmonisation of SAR was established in 1993 with the objective of assisting the ICAO and IMO in developing provisions regarding new SAR techniques and procedures where both aeronautical and maritime interests are involved. The revised IAMSAR Manual is scheduled to be published in 2016.
6. The ICAO Asia and Pacific Regional Office (APAC) has drafted the regional *Asia Pacific SAR Plan* to enable the region to meet the objectives of improving the SAR System. ASEAN has drafted the *ASEAN SAR Agreement* to enhance cooperation among members.

7. In spite of international, extra-regional and regional efforts, many states in the region are yet to identify areas that can be harmonized to effectively and efficiently cooperate and coordinate aeronautical and maritime SAR as there are no policy recommendations to do so. On completion of the Study Group Meetings, a CSCAP Memorandum will complement the existing frameworks in providing policy recommendations to Asia Pacific states in strengthening coordination and cooperation in this area. These recommendations may serve as regional best practices at the global level.
8. The Study Group paid particular attention to avoid duplication while complementing similar efforts on strengthening SAR.

### **Session 3: A Survey on Policies and Structures to enhance cooperation in Aeronautical and Maritime SAR in the Asia Pacific.**

9. This Session collectively identified specific areas which may require harmonisation in order to strengthen cooperation and coordination in SAR. The areas identified are as follows:

#### **9.1 SAR Policies**

9.1.1 Global Level. SAR Policies are to be addressed at three levels, global, regional and national. States may need to rationalise the Flight Information Regions (FIR) and Search and Rescue Regions (SRR) proportionate to their SAR capacities.

9.1.2. Regional Level. At the regional level, the geographical scope of the study is confined to the countries in the Asia Pacific region that are members of the ARF. Notwithstanding this, considering the predominantly maritime configuration of the region, the SAR structures, capacities, etc. of the countries of adjoining SRRs would also need to be factored, which translates into extension of the geographical scope to the entire Indo-Pacific region.

9.1.3 National Level. The issues to be addressed by states would need to encompass *inter alia* the following issues:

9.1.3.1 Accession to International Conventions. States may need to accede to the international conventions relevant to SAR to harmonize the legal support for undertaking SAR missions. What are the national constraints or sensitivities of countries that have not acceded to these international treaties, particularly the SAR Convention, 1979?

9.1.3.2. Inter-State Agreements/ Agreements. As envisaged by the Asia Pacific and ASEAN SAR Plans, states may need to establish arrangements to address adjoining Search and Rescue Regions (SRR) in the form of formal agreements or Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Could such bilateral arrangements help to assuage the sensitivities of the countries that have not acceded to the international conventions?

### **Session 4: Understanding Cooperative Mechanisms in National Aeronautical and Maritime SAR**

10 Cooperative mechanism plays a significance role in handling any SAR operations. They are important as they should advocate the requirements of IAMSAR towards responsive National SAR Plans to be part of the regional and global SAR Plan. With this view, mechanisms which address aeronautical-maritime a, civilian-military and civilian-community (volunteers) aspects must be able to be comprehensively amalgamated into an effective and efficient system. In this context, the following mechanisms were discussed.

10.1 Rescue Coordination Centres (RCC). The use of separate Aeronautical Rescue Coordination and Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres has its shortcomings as compared to the Joint Rescue Coordination Centres (JRCC). Since coordination is the key to SAR, it will be vital for

states to harmonise existing structures in strengthening cooperation and coordination especially where interoperability is concerned. The IAMSAR Manual provides guidance to states through a 'self-assessment' form. States may wish to conduct their own self assessment in recognising the need to strengthen cooperation and coordination of SAR. JRCCs provide a range of opportunities, which will be discussed further in the next Study Group meeting

10.2 Military – Civilian SAR. States that have separate military and civilian rescue capacities may need to harmonise their efforts to capitalise on the strengths and eradicate redundancies.

10.3 Community (Volunteer) SAR. There are growing number of states which have volunteers as part of the SAR System. Their roles, capacities and capabilities are vital to be harmonised into the National SAR system where every entity complements each other. Volunteers may fill gaps in civilian and military cooperative mechanisms.

11. Capacity and Capability Building. The strengthening of SAR by states may provide the impetus for capacity and capability enhancement of other states where shared competencies and capabilities will allow for better coordination and cooperation. SAR training and exercises include enhancing SAR Mission Coordinator (SMC) cross-competency in aeronautical and maritime SAR, and cross-training among diverse agencies. The inter-state SAR exercises are usually orchestrated; and therefore, these further the objective of diplomatic engagement more than enhancing SAR capabilities of participating agencies.

12. Coordination Processes. In a SAR situation, there will be a number of important coordination activities indirectly related to the main SAR effort. These include SAR logistics and regulation of information flow to the media. These processes may need to be harmonised to ensure timely and calibrated responses. This would involve a coherent SAR response to contingencies within the state, and involving inter-state cooperation, particularly in terms of synergizing the existing processes for aeronautical and maritime SAR, and the relevant civilian and military institutions. It would also involve considerations to cut-down reaction time for timely SAR response, and logistics arrangements for sustenance of SAR forces during a mission.

13. Technological Enablers. This would involve information sharing with optimum utilization of available SAR systems, maritime, aeronautical or space-based alerts and communication systems.

#### **Session 5: Harmonisation towards Standardisation**

States should not wait for accidents, calamities and catastrophes to begin collaborating. In such contingencies, the parties should have already developed adequate competency for coordinating their responses. The key lies in combined training.

#### **Session 6: Summary and Planning for the 2nd SG Meeting in India**

During this session, the SAR working group deliberated on specific areas and issues for harmonization of Aeronautical and Maritime SAR in the Asia-Pacific region, which were identified by the co-chairs. A consensus was reached, and the identified areas/issues received the consent of all participants of the working group. The areas/ issues are intended to be discussed during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Study Group meeting with the objective of strengthening the Asia Pacific Regional SAR Plan. Such a plan could be used by ARF to advise member states to strengthen SAR at national level, and serve as regional best practices at the global level. The forum agreed that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Study Group meeting be held in India.