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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.

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