

ASEAN



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Director's Letter

Hello Delegates,

My name is Edward Liu, and I am honoured to be able to serve as your director for BCMUN 2023's Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Committee. This year, we will focus on exploring the challenges posed by natural and humanitarian disasters in Southeast Asia. This region is very susceptible to natural disasters, including floods, tsunamis, and hurricanes. These events can displace and affect millions of people, resulting in massive economic and humanitarian damage.

As delegates of this committee, I encourage you to research the complexity of this topic, understand the specific challenges faced by Southeast Asian nations, and work collaboratively to formulate effective solutions. It is important to remember that our aim is not only to address ASEAN's response to the immediate aftermath of disasters but also to build resilience and preparedness for the future.

BCMUN 2023 promises to be an exciting journey filled with stimulating debates, innovative solutions, and personal growth. I eagerly anticipate the discussions, friendships, and memorable moments that await us during the conference.

If you have any questions or need guidance during your preparation, please don't hesitate to contact me at asean@bcmun.org. I am here to help you with anything you may need assistance with and to ensure a fruitful and fun Model UN experience for all. I look forward to meeting each of you and witnessing the incredible contributions you will bring to ASEAN at BCMUN 2023.

Warm regards,

Edward Liu

Director of ASEAN Committee — BCMUN 2023

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Committee Description

Encompassing 600 million people across 10 different countries, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations was founded on 8 August 1967 by five countries - Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines.¹ At the time of founding, ASEAN's primary objectives were to further the economic growth of all member-states and to maintain peace in Southeastern Asia. ASEAN has now evolved to be able to assert itself on the global stage, and it has become one of the most successful international organizations in the entire world, with almost every Southeast Asian nation having fully joined the organization. As of 2023, ASEAN is considering the membership application of Timor-Leste (also known as East Timor), and the country is currently an official observer in the organization.

Topic Overview

Every year, Southeast Asia is affected by a variety of natural disasters, including floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, and tsunamis. The effects of climate change, which increase the unpredictability and severity of these disasters, further amplify these occurrences. Southeast Asia is particularly vulnerable to these catastrophes due to its location on the “Ring of Fire”, a region of the world particularly sensitive to natural disasters due to its plate tectonics.¹ With 40% of all reported incidents being related to flooding, this specific natural disaster stands out as being the most common in the area.² The significance of the impact that floods have on the lives and livelihoods of populations throughout Southeast Asia is highlighted by this figure.³ These areas are more susceptible to disastrous floods as a result of issues like deforestation, urbanization, and poor infrastructure in addition to the heavy rainfall.

In Southeast Asia, recent years have seen some of the deadliest natural disasters, with Indonesia and the Philippines among the worst-hit nations. For example, Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, experienced one of the worst rainstorms in the previous 20 years in 2020. Due to the ensuing floods, 400,000 people were forced to leave their homes, with over 60 deaths occurring due to said rainstorm.⁴ It is important to emphasize that regional conflicts and political difficulties frequently make it difficult to properly respond to these natural catastrophes and humanitarian crises. Such events prevent emergency help and assistance from being delivered in a timely manner, leaving civilians—including children—in dangerous situations without prompt assistance.

¹ <https://science.howstuffworks.com/environmental/earth/geology/ring-of-fire.htm>

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3529313/>

³ Ibid

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<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/indonesias-giant-capital-city-is-sinking-can-the-governments-plan-save-it>

Southeast Asia is struggling with the long-term implications of increasing sea levels in addition to the immediate effects of yearly disasters. Global sea levels have increased by more than 20 centimetres over the previous century, with accelerating rates seen in recent decades. Due to the presence of highly inhabited areas that are only marginally elevated above current sea levels, Southeast Asian countries face the brunt of this sea level rise. If this pattern continues, major cities in the region such as Bangkok, Jakarta, Ho Chi Minh City, and Manila face the terrifying possibility of being swamped by 2050.⁵ Millions of people's lives would be in danger, and essential infrastructure would sustain permanent damage. The extensive coastlines of Southeast Asian countries, which are already susceptible to natural disasters like monsoons and floods, are further compounded by the rising sea levels, exacerbating the challenges faced by these nations.

Given the multifaceted nature of the region's disaster risks, there is a pressing need for comprehensive and coordinated efforts to address both immediate and long-term challenges. Regional cooperation, information sharing, and capacity building initiatives are crucial in enhancing disaster preparedness, response, and recovery strategies in Southeast Asia. By prioritizing proactive measures and disaster response practices, the region can strive towards building resilience and safeguarding the lives and well-being of its communities.

Timeline

2003: The establishment of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) marked the beginning of regional cooperation in addressing disaster management issues.⁶

December 26, 2004: A catastrophic earthquake struck off the coast of northern Sumatra, Indonesia, triggering a devastating tsunami that caused extensive destruction and claimed the lives of at least 225,000 people in several countries, including Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Maldives, and Thailand.⁷

2009: The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER), a legally binding regional agreement, was ratified to strengthen disaster management efforts.⁸

2012: A powerful tropical cyclone made landfall in the southern Philippine island of Mindanao, causing widespread devastation across 30 provinces and resulting in the tragic death toll of at least 1,901 individuals.⁹

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<https://www.straitstimes.com/world/united-states/scientists-triple-their-estimates-of-the-number-of-people-threatened-by-rising>

⁶ <https://asean.org/major-sectoral-bodies-committees-2/>

⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Indian-Ocean-tsunami-of-2004>

⁸ <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/AADMER-Work-Programme-2021-2025.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.cnn.com/2012/12/04/world/asia/philippines-typhoon/index.html>

November 2013: Typhoon Haiyan hits the Philippines, leading to destructive winds, coastal storm surges, heavy rainfall, and widespread flooding.¹⁰

December 2015: The ASEAN Vision 2025 on Disaster Management is endorsed by the 3rd ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management (AMMDM) focused on a people-centered, financially sustainable disaster management.¹¹

2017: In Myanmar, a genocide begins against the Rohingya minority located in Rakhine State. Over a million Rohingya people are forced to flee the country, creating a refugee crisis in neighbouring Bangladesh (not part of ASEAN).

2017: The Union of Concerned Scientists, highlighted that tropical cyclones are becoming more rampant due to climate change.¹²

September 28, 2018: A significant earthquake with a magnitude of 7.5 struck Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, causing widespread impact in the mountainous Donggala Regency.¹³

July 2019: The ASEAN Workshop on ICT Roadmap 2025 and Beyond led to the development of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Roadmap on Disaster Management for the future.¹⁴

August 2019: Indonesia made the decision to relocate its capital from Jakarta to Borneo due to concerns about rising sea levels.¹⁵

2020: The Coronavirus pandemic severely affected South East Asia, multiplying the effect of natural disasters in the region.

May 2021: Myanmar experiences a military coup, leading to a guerilla insurgency forming in the country against the military junta. This conflict is ongoing as of 2023, and the junta is still in control.

August 2021: The ASEAN Strategic Policy Dialogue on Disaster Management aimed to foster discussions on identifying upcoming humanitarian trends, challenges, and opportunities.¹⁶

¹⁰ <https://www.worldvision.org/disaster-relief-news-stories/2013-typhoon-haiyan-facts>

¹¹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/asean-vision-2025-disaster-management>

¹² <https://theaseanpost.com/article/mitigating-natural-disasters-asean>

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<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/indonesia-tsunami-sulawesi-explained-science-geology>

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<https://ahacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ICT-Roadmap-on-Disaster-Management-for-2025-and-Beyond.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/jakarta-sinking-indonesia-capital-city-borneo-sea-2019-08-27/>

¹⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/asean-strategic-policy-dialogue-disaster-management-spddm-2022>

Current Situation

Lack of Funding

One of the largest factors hampering the ASEAN response to natural disasters is a lack of funding. As of 2023, ASEAN and the AADMER is funded almost solely through member donations. Although this does make some sense, member states typically only provide funding in response to crises, which limits the ability of ASEAN to prepare for natural disasters before they occur. ASEAN has come up with a few ways to solve this issue, but none have been implemented so far. These solutions include soliciting donations from wealthy members of Southeast Asian diaspora around the world, incentivizing private businesses to support natural disaster response/prevention, and utilising Islamic Social Finance.¹⁷

Lack of Partnerships

A major reason why ASEAN currently suffers from slow response times to natural disasters is its lack of significant partnerships with local organisations. Until ASEAN resources and personnel arrive at the disaster site, it is unable to begin responding to natural disasters. One way this can be overcome is through partnering with local NGOs, religious organisations, and other parts of civil society. By having a direct line of communication between ASEAN and people in the affected areas, ASEAN would be able to orchestrate its response better, and the local knowledge possessed by these organisations would allow them to assist in the ASEAN response.¹⁸

The Myanmar Problem

Unfortunately, there are also major divides within the ASEAN organisation. ASEAN has failed to come to a decision on the civil war in Myanmar, with some governments supporting the junta and others supporting the ousted government. Unfortunately, this lack of action only harms the citizens of Myanmar. Additionally, Myanmar's position within the bloc is under threat, with its top generals not being invited to ASEAN summits since the coup. In order to properly prepare against natural disasters, ASEAN must unify.

Case Study - Typhoon Haiyan

Background

On November 8, 2013, a typhoon equivalent to a category 5 hurricane would make landfall on the southern coast of the Philippines after passing through Palau. With wind speeds reaching up to 320 km/h, this Super Typhoon would end up being one of the deadliest typhoons in Philippines history, resulting in over 6000 deaths, 1500 missing and 28000 injuries. According to ASEAN, the typhoon caused 142 million US dollars worth of

¹⁷ https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/fa-220416_DM2025_email.pdf

¹⁸ Ibid.

damages.¹⁹ However, statements by the World Bank stated that there was over \$12.9 billion USD in damages.²⁰ ASEAN and the Philippine government faced criticism for their handling of the situation and slow reaction to the storm and its aftermath.²¹

Before Landfall

On November 4, 2013, 4 days before Typhoon Haiyan made landfall on the Philippines, the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) observed and monitored the formation of a weather disturbance in the Pacific Ocean. In joint with the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) and the Joint Typhoon Warning Center (JTWC), the AHA Centre spread information on social media regarding the existence of a typhoon. On the 6th of November, PAGASA set a rain warning level to yellow, indicating 7.5 mm and 15 mm of rain. ASEAN then immediately began preparations to provide further assistance. Several ASEAN member states including Malaysia and Brunei were on standby to assist the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) with disaster response.²²

Landfall

On November 8th, Typhoon Haiyan reached the southern coast of the Philippines. ASEAN set up an emergency communications base and spread information to the citizens of the Philippines. 3 days later, the AHA Centre then mobilized 250 thousand USD worth of relief materials to the Philippines in order to help those affected by Typhoon Haiyan.²³ It was also on the 11th of November that Typhoon Haiyan had dissipated, after passing through Palau, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Southern China.²⁴

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<https://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/asia-pacific-humanitarian-bulletin-2013>; <https://ahacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/WeatheringThePerfectStormSecondEdition.compressed.pdf>

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<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2020/04/09/the-philippines-transferring-the-cost-of-severe-natural-disasters-to-capital-markets>

²¹ <https://www.cfr.org/blog/wherefore-art-thou-asean-typhoon-haiyans-teachable-moment>

²² <https://ahacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/WeatheringThePerfectStormSecondEdition.compressed.pdf>

²³ Ibid

²⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Super-Typhoon-Haiyan#ref313482>

Aftermath

On the following day, the AHA center and ASEAN secretariat prepared briefings and a press conference. Later, on the 19th of November 2013, the first package of aid provided by the AHA center reached the Philippines, which included 2000 bottles of water and 2.5 tons of rice, helping to start the initial recovery process in the Philippines. On the 9th of January, 2014, the final batch of assistance from the AHA center was delivered. In total, ASEAN provided around \$5 million USD in cash, as well as 17 military transport planes and 5 naval ships worth of relief to the Philippines.

Reflection

In the end, Typhoon Haiyan caused countless damages to the Philippines and surrounding areas. ASEAN's response to Typhoon Haiyan was largely underwhelming, however it was not a complete failure. The AHA Center's monitoring of the storm before its formation was fast, and the distribution of information towards South-East Asian residents was also swift. ASEAN was also able to aid in coordinating relief efforts between the Philippines, itself, and other nations. Unfortunately, ASEAN's contributions largely stop there. Compared to ASEAN itself, many foreign countries provided much more aid to the Philippines. For example, the United States sent over \$37 million USD in aid, while also mobilising the carrier USS George Washington (and the personnel on board) to aid in relief and search and rescue efforts.²⁵ ASEAN itself only provided two search and rescue personnel in total, with other statistics being similarly disappointing - one single generator, 53 medical and disaster assistance personnel, and 200 boxes of temporary living equipment. Keeping in mind that over 16 million people were affected, with over 4 million of those people being displaced, these statistics show an enormous underperformance by ASEAN in response to the disaster.²⁶

²⁵ <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/11/19/fact-sheet-us-response-typhoon-haiyan>

²⁶ <https://ahacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/WeatheringThePerfectStormSecondEdition.compressed.pdf>

Past Involvement

The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER)

The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) is a legally binding regional agreement that unites ASEAN Member States in their efforts to reduce disaster losses and enhance collaborative emergency response in the ASEAN region. Ratified by all ten Member States, it came into effect on December 24, 2009.²⁷ AADMER serves as a shared platform and regional policy foundation for disaster management in ASEAN. The AADMER Work Programme provides a comprehensive framework for the region's disaster management priorities over five-year periods.²⁸ The agreement also aims to establish a region of resilient nations that support and complement each other, sharing a common goal of minimizing the adverse impacts of disasters to create safer communities and sustainable development. The mission is to enhance and support ASEAN's capabilities in disaster risk reduction and management through inter-sectoral cooperation, capacity building, innovative approaches that can scale, mobilization of resources, forging new partnerships, and strengthening coordination among ASEAN Member States.²⁹ The ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) oversees the implementation of the Work Programme and reports directly to the Ministers responsible for Disaster Management, who also serve as the Conference of the Parties (COP). As the Governing Board of the AHA Centre, the ACDM provides further guidance to the AHA Centre, which serves as the primary operational body for AADMER.³⁰

ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan

The ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan (AJDRP), is a part of AADMER. Its primary objective is to establish a unified framework for coordinating and delivering a prompt, comprehensive, and collaborative response in the face of large-scale disasters within the ASEAN region.³¹ The AJDRP encompasses various scenarios of significant disasters, envisioning a wide range of potential crises that may occur. These scenarios include, but are not limited to: devastating earthquakes, powerful typhoons, destructive floods, widespread fires, hazardous chemical spills, and other catastrophic events that can cause substantial damage and pose threats to the lives and livelihoods of communities. One of the key elements of the AJDRP is the compilation of a comprehensive list of assets that can be rapidly mobilized by member states in the event of such large-scale disasters.³² These assets encompass a diverse range of resources, including search and rescue teams, medical

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<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/asian-journal-of-international-law/article/abs/disaster-response-in-south-east-asia-the-asean-agreement-on-disaster-response-and-emergency-management/FD77A7CB07AE4F4232A69237F521C450>

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ <https://aseandrr.org/about/aadmer>

³⁰ <https://agreement.asean.org/media/download/20220330063139.pdf>

³¹ <https://asean.org/book/asean-un-joint-strategic-plan-of-action-on-disaster-management-iv-2021-2025/>

³²

<https://www.unescap.org/our-work/ict-disaster-risk-reduction/regional-cooperation-in-disaster-risk-reduction/asean-united-nations-joint-strategic-plan-of-action-on-disaster-management>

personnel and facilities, emergency response equipment and supplies, engineering and construction resources, logistical support, communication systems, and coordination mechanisms. By having this list readily available, the plan ensures that the necessary resources can be swiftly deployed to affected areas, facilitating an efficient and effective response.

The ICT Roadmap for Disaster Management in 2025

The ICT Roadmap for Disaster Management in 2025 and beyond serves as a guiding document to ensure that the initiatives and work program of the ICT function are in line with the organization's plan and strategic direction. It is a versatile tool that provides guidelines for ICT infrastructure and solutions for the AHA Centre and its network with the ASEAN Member States (AMS).³³ This roadmap is not only significant for the AHA Centre but also for all AMS, as it aims to enhance the ICT capabilities for the improvement of disaster management in the ASEAN region. During the ASEAN Workshop on ICT Roadmap 2025 and Beyond, held on 17-18 July 2019, the AHA Centre collaborated closely with representatives from all ten AMS and the ASEAN Secretariat as the ICT Task Force.³⁴

Potential Solutions

Infrastructure Development

Constructing resilient infrastructure is vital to withstand natural disasters. This includes designing buildings and critical infrastructure with reinforced materials and incorporating measures like earthquake-resistant structures, flood-proofing, and stormwater management systems.

Urban Planning and Land Use Management

Governments should enforce strict urban planning regulations to prevent haphazard development in high-risk areas. This includes zoning laws that prohibit construction in floodplains, landslide-prone areas, or near active fault lines. Proper land use management can minimize exposure to natural hazards.

Improved Building Codes and Standards

Enforcing and updating building codes and standards is essential for constructing disaster-resilient structures. Regular inspections and certifications should be conducted to ensure compliance. Training programs for architects, engineers, and builders can enhance their understanding of resilient design principles.

Community Preparedness and Education

³³ <https://ahacentre.org/publication/ict-roadmap-on-disaster-management-for-2025-and-beyond/>

³⁴

<https://ahacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ICT-Roadmap-on-Disaster-Management-for-2025-and-Beyond.pdf>

Educating communities on disaster preparedness, response, and recovery measures is crucial. Governments can conduct awareness campaigns, training programs, and drills to equip individuals with knowledge and skills to effectively respond during emergencies. Promoting community-based disaster risk reduction initiatives can enhance resilience at the grassroots level.

Insurance and Financial Mechanisms

Developing and promoting affordable disaster insurance schemes can help individuals, businesses, and governments recover quickly after a disaster. Governments can also establish disaster risk financing mechanisms to allocate funds for emergency response and post-disaster reconstruction.

International Assistance and Collaboration

South East Asian countries can seek international assistance and collaboration to enhance their disaster management capabilities. Collaborating with international organizations, sharing expertise, and accessing funding for disaster risk reduction projects can strengthen the region's resilience to natural disasters.

Implementing these solutions requires strong political will, financial investment, and collaboration among governments, communities, and international partners. By adopting these measures, South East Asian countries can better prepare for and respond to natural disasters, ultimately reducing their impact on lives, infrastructure, and the environment.

Discussion Questions

1. How can ASEAN fund its disaster response?
2. How can ASEAN better respond to natural disasters?
3. Should ASEAN intervene in humanitarian disasters not related to natural disasters? (e.g. Rohingya genocide)
4. What should ASEAN do in response to the coup in Myanmar?

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