

Synergizing Regional Efforts and Resources for HADR



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Vice Admiral SS Ranasinghe Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy, ladies and gentlemen, it is my profound privilege to be present amongst such an august gathering of Military commanders, representatives of Think tanks and Scholars from all over the world and share my views on the importance of Synergizing Regional Efforts for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief. Surely, Sri Lanka Navy deserves commendation for successfully organizing Galle Dialogue since 2010. Sri Lanka Navy commitment and resolve towards achieving regional maritime cooperation to face common challenges in the maritime realm through this dialogue are praiseworthy. The forum provides an opportunity to deliberate upon maritime related challenges and their possible solutions.

2. Before we proceed further on the subject, I offer my sincere sympathy and support to all those who have been affected by the earthquake and ensuing tsunami in Indonesia on 28 Sep 18.

3. Ladies and gentlemen, although disasters can be natural or human-induced,

our focus in today's discussion will be on natural disasters. Overview of my paper is as flashed.

- Introduction
- Trend of Natural Disasters
- Pakistan's Experience in HADR
- International Initiatives to Synergize HADR efforts
- Armed Forces contribution for coordinated HADR
- Recommendations

4. Natural disasters are caused by extreme occurrences in nature for which society is unprepared. Disasters result from the combination of natural hazards including earthquakes, cyclones, excess rainfall, tsunamis, drought, forest fires etc and susceptibility of a community to the impact of these hazards¹. In the aftermath of any disaster, there is an urgent requirement to provide Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief. Humanitarian Assistance can be defined as 'Activities conducted to relieve or reduce human pain, disease, hunger or loss of property while Disaster Relief can be defined as goods

1 Disaster Risk Management in South Asia: A Regional Overview by World Bank, 2012.

and services provided to meet the immediate needs of disaster hit communities and to mitigate the ill effects of the disasters².

5. Before proceeding further on the subject, it is prudent to discuss the trends and causes of natural disasters. The frequency of natural disasters in the world has increased in the last decades. On global level, in 1970s approximately 69 natural disasters were recorded annually³. Whereas in 2014, the figure increased to 337 catastrophes which affected 94 countries⁴. Similarly, average economic losses due to natural disasters were approximately 12 billion US dollars per year in 1970s have grown to more than 210 billion US dollars per year in recent years.

6. Ladies and Gentlemen, Regional Trend of disasters also correspond to global trend. South Asian Region is highly exposed and vulnerable to the impacts of natural hazards. Number of disasters has increased steadily starting with 8 reported disasters in 1971 to more than 40 in 2009 which indicates a fivefold increase. These disasters have cumulatively affected over 2 billion people and caused over 800,000 deaths. Direct economic losses recorded over this time period amount to over 80 billion US dollars⁵. The increase in reported disasters is driven, in large part, by a greater number of hydro-meteorological events. Although, the number of seismic events has remained relatively steady over the past 40 years, but flood and storm events have become increasingly common despite relatively consistent rainfall patterns.

7. The growth in the number of hydro-meteorological events is driven by the region's limited capacity to manage high rainfall and cyclones and an increased concentration of urban and industrial developments in high risk areas which results in a greater number of incidents and higher economic losses.

Ladies and Gentlemen, bird's eye view of global and regional trend of disasters brings us to profile of Natural Disasters in Pakistan. Pakistan's diverse geography exposes it to a large number of hazards. Pakistan's location between the Himalayas to the north and the coast of the Arabian Sea to the South, give rise to its distinct physiographic zones. Earthquake exposure is very high in the northern region, while runoff from the mountain rivers and the monsoon season leads to pronounced flood exposure throughout the country. Highly dense population resides in disaster prone areas which makes the country vulnerable to adverse natural events. Floods have been the most recurrent and have had the greatest impact, while earthquakes have happened less often but caused significant concentrated damages. Total deaths over the past 40 years exceed 90,000, and total recorded losses from disasters amount to 20 billion US dollars, including the 10 billion US dollars in losses caused by the 2010 flood, and 5 billion US dollars by the 2005 earthquake.

9. Pakistan has learnt valuable lessons in HADR. As a consequence of the 2005 earthquake, the Government of Pakistan made concerted efforts towards establishing a comprehensive disaster management regime which involved a strategic shift from the reactive to a proactive approach. To implement this proactive strategy, an integrated management structure has been set up that links the vital functions of preparedness/ risk reduction and early recovery to longer term reconstruction and rehabilitation.

10. In 2006, National Disaster Management Ordinance (NDMO) replaced the historic 1958 Calamity Act to govern disaster response and recovery activities. Under the same ordinance, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) was established. The NDMA is the national coordinating agency for disaster risk reduction and all the aspects of Disaster Risk Management from risk identification and

2 IONS Guidelines for HADR Version 3.0

3 Ibid.

4 List of Disaster Relief Organization, www.raptim.org/34-disaster-relief-organizations/

5 Disaster Risk Management in South Asia: A Regional Overview by World Bank, 2012.

mitigation to post-disaster recovery and reconstruction. NDMA procedures devised on the basis of 2005 earthquake experience were put to test after the 2010 floods in Pakistan. The procedures are being revised on the basis of experiences of subsequent disasters. However, one of the major lessons learnt was need for coordination and synergy among various organizations participating at local, national, international and non-governmental level.

11. In the absence of regional setup for coordination of HADR, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is the United Nations body responsible for bringing together national and international humanitarian providers to ensure a coherent response to emergencies. OCHA also ensures that a framework is in place for coordinated effort by all involved. During 2005 earthquake and 2010 & 11 floods in Pakistan the HADR efforts were organized by OCHA in coordination with NDMA in clusters involving various international organizations⁶.

12. Ladies and gentlemen, as I have discussed about development of NDMA in Pakistan, National Disaster Management Authority in India, Ministry of Disaster Management in Sri Lanka, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief in Bangladesh and other similar organizations in the neighbouring countries are also involved in the HADR efforts on national level. However, considering the magnitude that the natural calamities could have, there is a need to collaborate at the regional level to synergise efforts and resources for effective HADR operations in our disaster prone region in addition to OCHA

13. In this regard, you would be glad to know that realization to integrate our efforts already exists through the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, which was adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, on 18 March 2015. The Framework recognizes that each State has the primary responsibility to prevent and reduce disaster risk, including through international, regional, sub-regional, trans-boundary and bilateral cooperation. It also outlines seven clear targets and four priorities for action to prevent new and reduce existing disaster risks⁷.

14. On the regional level, Regional Consultative Committee (RCC) on Disaster Management was established in year 2000 under the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC), Thailand. It is one initiative to synergize the national agencies and authorities entrusted with disaster management in Asian countries. RCC serves as a common platform to promote regional cooperation towards achieving common goals especially the progress on the Sendai Framework. The committee has been meeting regularly to deliberate on themes of interest encompassing disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Therefore, RCC is well positioned to render advice and support on disaster and climate risk management to its member countries. 13th RCC Meeting on "Operationalizing Global Frameworks for Risk-Resilient Development in Asia" was held in Islamabad, Pakistan from 17 – 19 Oct 16. During the meeting, the delegates from 16 Asian countries identified the key aspects for Operationalizing Global Frameworks, which are:

6 Nutrition: World Food Programme (WFP), Water & Sanitation: UN International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Health: World Health Organization (WHO), Emergency Shelter: International Organization of Migrants (IOM), Recovery & Reconstruction: UN Development Programme (UNDP), IT/ Communication: WFP, Logistics: WFP, Camp Management: UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Protection: UNICEF, Education: UNICEF.

7 The priority areas include, (i) Understanding disaster risk; (ii) Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk; (iii) Investing in disaster reduction for resilience and; (iv) Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

8 14th RCC Meeting is scheduled in Katmandu, Nepal from 3-5 Dec 18. Theme of the meeting is "Coherence Between Global Development Framework and Challenges of Implementation"

a. Commonalities in global frameworks present ample opportunities for deliberate planning and coordination for cost-effective resilient development.

b. The partnership between disaster management agencies and authorities with non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations need to be further improved and institutionalized.

c. Possibility of cooperation among various regional forums in the specific domain of disaster risk management, climate change and sustainable development goals.

d. The need for disaster management agencies and authorities to enhance coherence in their approaches, in order to synergize the varying requirements of the different global frameworks at the national level in a cost effective manner.

15. Ladies and Gentlemen, Armed forces due to their operational capacity, quick mobilisation, technical wherewithal, trained manpower and resources are amongst the first to join civil administration to deal with disasters. Similarly, Navies, across the globe, are by default well-suited

to render HADR beyond horizons. Pakistan Navy had been carrying out proactive and responsive HA&DR operations particularly after the East-Asian tsunami of 2004⁹, rescue of MV Suez from pirates in 2011¹⁰, conduct of Humanitarian Operations in evacuating the stranded Pakistanis and foreign nationals in Yemen in 2015¹¹, and extending assistance to Sri Lanka during floods/ rains in May 2017¹². To bolster regional maritime cooperation, Pakistan Navy has established a Joint Maritime Information and Coordination Centre (JMICC) in 2012. The Centre aims to harness efforts of relevant national agencies and international stakeholders for sharing of information related to incidents at sea for coordinated efforts and effective response.

16. Ladies and gentlemen, it is also encouraging to note that as Regional Cooperation Committee is endeavouring to synergize the regional efforts at policy level, Navies are also preparing themselves towards collaborative efforts for effective HADR. Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) forum has been working in this regard through initiatives being mentioned now:

9 Type During the devastating onslaught of tsunami in 2004, Pakistan Navy ships NASR, an auxiliary tanker, and TARIQ, a Type-21 destroyer which were on goodwill cruise to South East Asia extended humanitarian assistance to Bangladesh, Indonesia, Maldives and Sri Lanka. The ships and their resources were put to the service of governments of the affected countries for evacuation and relief of the stranded tourists/ locals from islands. Pakistan continued the humanitarian, diplomatic and logistic assistance by sending another task group comprising Type-21 frigate and an auxiliary PNS KHAIBAR and PNS MOAWIN with ample relief goods to Indonesia and Sri Lanka. These vessels had three helicopters, a Pak Marines detachment, naval doctors, and paramedics. Besides, relief goods medicines, medical equipment, food supplies, tents, and blankets were sent in enormous quantities to the affected populace in friendly countries.

10 Operation Umeed-e-Nau, a Pakistan Navy operation against piracy, was launched in June 2011 to rescue MV Suez attacked and taken hostage by Somali pirates. PNS ZULFIQUAR a sword class destroyer and PNS BABUR safely evacuated 22 crew members, including 11 Egyptians, 6 Indians, 4 Pakistanis and a Sri Lankan and brought to Pakistan for onward journey to their respective homelands.

11 In 2015, Pakistan Navy carried out another successful HA&DR operation in Yemen. PNS ASLAT, a sword class combatant, safely evacuated 148 Pakistanis and 35 foreign nationals, including 11 Indians, 8 Chinese and 4 Britons. In a similar operation, PNS ASLAT and PNS SHAMSHEER safely evacuated not only 190 stranded Pakistanis in Yemen but 55 foreign nationals of China, India, Philippines, UK, Indonesia, Syria, Canada, Egypt, Jordan, UAE, Bangladesh, Romania, Qatar, Ethiopia and Germany.

12 In 2017, in the aftermath of severe floods in Sri Lanka, Pakistan Navy extended support to Sri Lankan authorities for the flood affected local populace. PNS ZULFIQUAR performed as the base camp for Navy HA&DR operations.

a. Compilation of Maritime Information Exchange Directory (MIED)¹³ including Points of Contact (POCs) of IONS members and observers which can be used to consult maritime organizations of the regional countries for immediate help.

b. IONSHADR Guidelines¹⁴ are at preparatory stage which aim to provide guidelines for developing a speedy, responsive, coordinated and effective HADR for IONS members. The document also includes the directory of assets available with the member countries

17. Ladies and gentlemen, it is considered that collaboration between regional nations at RCC and IONS for are preliminary steps. Within South Asian Region collaborative disaster relief mechanism is yet to be developed which may require diplomatic/ political level arrangements to provide legal basis for collaboration. Our region can capitalize on the national experience on HADR through an appropriate forum like SAARC, IONS etc. I am optimistic that in times to come the preliminary work by these organizations will pave the way for synergizing regional efforts and resources when the need arises.

CONCLUSION

18. Ladies and Gentlemen, let me conclude by summarising that the increasing frequency and intensity of disaster events is a concern of most stakeholders across the world. Governments, international institutions, non-profit organizations, and the private sector have committed significant resources to raise awareness about the vulnerability of populations to natural hazards. These frequent disasters point to an urgent requirement to establish an arrangement of collective emergency response for

disaster relief. HADR is, and should remain, a predominantly civilian function; however, humanitarian principles also dictate that all available resources, including military assets, should be used to minimize the human cost of a natural disaster. There is a further need to integrate our strengths to develop a credible capability and capacity to provide HADR within our region and may be beyond. We need to build on this base to ensure that response to any future disaster is swift and well coordinated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

19. Ladies and Gentlemen, based on today's discussion, I have few recommendations which include

20. Risks of disasters in the region may be understood at all levels to formulate bilateral and multilateral proactive response.

21. Diplomatic and political protocols and arrangements may be made on regional level to provide legal instruments for collaboration in disaster relief domain.

22. Targets and priority areas outlined in Sendai Framework be pursued by all regional states to reduce risk of disasters.

23. HADR response at national levels be consolidated to develop a well coordinated regional response utilizing the platform of Regional Consultative Committee.

13 MIED was compiled by IONS Working Group (IWG) on 'Information Sharing and Interoperability chaired by Pakistan. Data from 21 countries (Australia, Bangladesh, France, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, Timor Leste, Japan Madagascar, Malaysia and Netherlands) was included whereas information from 11 countries (Mauritius, Mozambique, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, UAE, UK, China, Germany, Italy, Russia and Spain) was awaited).

14 Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief IONS Working Group consists of 10 countries (Australia, Bangladesh, France, India, Indonesia, Iran, Maldives, Oman, Thailand, Timor Leste) and chaired by India.

24. HADR aspects may be kept in focus in operational trainings and exercises of the regional Navies to facilitate swift response to disasters. National flag carriers may also be integrated in the response to reduce dependence on commercial means.

25. Maritime Information Exchange Directory (MIED) compiled by IONS Working Group may be further developed to include

information of all the members and observer Navies in IONS forum.

26. A hotline may be established between disaster management organizations of the region for speedy flow of communications. Similarly, data sharing on incidents at sea and early warning of natural hazards may be carried out through integration of regional centres similar to JMICC.

27. HADR guidelines developed by HADR IONS Working Group may be validated through Table Top Exercise and further improved.