



**EUROPEAN UNION**

DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO THAILAND, LAO PDR, and MYANMAR/BURMA

DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AID (ECHO) Regional office for East and Southeast Asia

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**PRESS RELEASE**

**EU - ASEAN Disaster Preparedness: EU participates in ARF DIREX 2013 Thailand**

Several delegations of the European Commission and EU Member States will be attending the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Disaster Relief Exercises (DiREx) 2013 to be held in Cha-Am, Petchaburi Province in Thailand on 7-11 May.

The exercise is being co-hosted by the Kingdom of Thailand and the Republic of Korea will bring together disaster response teams from more than 26 countries and the EU.

In the European Commission, the co-ordination of EU disaster response falls under the responsibility of the department for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) led by Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva.

The ECHO delegation will be led by its Director of Operations, Jean-Louis de Brouwer.

Two members of the European External Action Service (EEAS) Directorate for Crisis Response, Gioliano Porcelli and Giorgio Porzio, will also be participating in the exercises.

Through its Civil Protection Mechanism, the EU will finance the participation of teams from EU member states, namely two urban search and rescue teams from Austria and Belgium and one team of communication experts from Luxembourg.

Director de Brouwer explained: "Training in rapid deployment and good co-ordination between ASEAN member states and regional partners such as the EU is vital in creating effective disaster response which saves lives" he explained. "These exercises provide an important platform for an exchange of technical knowledge and experiences."

**Background**

The ARF DiREx 2013 will be held in Cha-Am, Thailand from 7-11 May 2013 and is being co-hosted by the Royal Thai government and the Republic of Korea. It will bring together disaster response teams not only from ASEAN member states but also China, Japan, the US and EU. Two previous ARF DiREx exercises held in 2009 and 2011 have been widely recognized as landmark events in improving the capacity of the region's disaster response mechanism and multinational operation context. ARF DiREx 2013 will continue to focus on civil-military co-ordination in response to disasters and address issues such on the strategic, operational and tactical levels. During the exercise, which will simulate a major earthquake and tsunami, civil and military emergency assets from the participating nations will be deployed to test their capacities in responding to such emergencies in an effective and co-ordinated manner. An After Action Review will evaluate performance of participating units and provide recommendations.

The ECHO delegation led by Director of Operations, Jean-Louis de Brouwer, also includes Deputy Head of the Unit for Strategy, Coordination and Inter-institutional Relations, Mr. Javier Perez Aparacio, and Mrs. Vera Mazzara, a member of ECHO' Crisis Response Unit. The head of ECHO's Regional Support Office in Bangkok, Mr. David Verboom, will also join the ECHO team.

As a further sign of deepening EU-ASEAN cooperation, ECHO has invited Mrs. Alicia Dela Rosa Bala, Deputy Secretary-General for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) to attend the inauguration of its Emergency Response Center (ERC) on 6 May 2013 in Brussels. The ERC will be responsible for the coordination of all EU member states disaster response assets which are deployed on request within and outside the EU.

**For more information:**

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