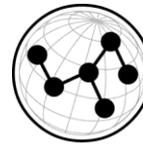




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The EU CBRN Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative in South East Asia: 5th anniversary of the opening of the Regional Secretariat in Manila

Mitigating chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks in South East Asia

Manila, 9 March 2018

A nerve agent at an airport, bird flu, an accident in a nuclear power plant in a neighbouring country; what do they have in common? Prevention and mitigation of and response to such incidents involve a multitude of actors, including a variety of government bodies.

To help partner countries in eight regions of the world to enhance coordination between departments and agencies at national, regional and international level, the European Union (EU) created the EU Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence (CoE) Initiative. The initiative adopts an all-hazards approach, involving the full spectrum of CBRN risks, ranging from criminal (e. g. theft, sabotage, illicit trafficking and terrorism) to accidental (e. g. industrial accidents, waste treatment, transport incidents) and natural (e. g. infectious disease outbreaks, CBRN releases caused by natural hazards). This holistic approach is crucial to prevent such unwanted events from having serious consequences on society, health, the environment, agriculture, livelihood, security, the economy and international relations.

The South East Asia region with its ten member countries established its Regional Secretariat of the EU CBRN CoE Initiative in Manila. For five years now, the Secretariat has been hosted generously in the Malacañang Palace by the Government of the Philippines under the aegis of the Anti-Terrorism Council-Program Management Center (ATC-PMC), Office of the Executive Secretary; a reason for government officials and the diplomatic community to celebrate at a gathering in the Mabini Hall of the palace.

With the support of the EU CBRN CoE Initiative, the Philippines established its CBRN National Team in 2012, comprised of representatives from all government bodies addressing CBRN risks. Other countries followed or already had structures in place, resulting in all ten South East Asian partner countries having CBRN National Teams or equivalents to coordinate on CBRN matters now.

In order to prevent, mitigate and respond to CBRN risks more adequately, nine South East Asian partner countries have CBRN National Action Plans or equivalents in place at different stages of development. Six of these countries were supported by the EU CBRN CoE Initiative in their work in this regard, when they established strategic country priorities and identified concrete actions required to address existing gaps related to those priorities.

Since 2010, the EU CBRN CoE Initiative has supported 25 fully EU funded CBRN projects in South East Asia, addressing common needs in the region with more than 26 million euro. The initiative has enabled increased participation and visibility of partner countries in international fora and coordination platforms.



Several partner countries have already used their CBRN National Action Plan successfully as guidance for the engagement of donor countries to support the implementation of priority actions.

During the opening session of the anniversary celebration, the Officer-in-Charge of the ATC-PMC, Attorney Florentino Manalastas Jr., reflected on the growing awareness in the ASEAN region of CBRN risks and the importance that the Philippines give to preventing CBRN incidents. Mr. Mattias Lentz, Chargé d’Affaires a. i. of the Delegation of the European Union to the Philippines, in turn said: "We from the European Union commend the governments of the Philippines and the nine other South East Asian member countries of the EU CBRN CoE Initiative for their commitments as well as their coordinated approach to mitigate CBRN risks." The Regional Coordinator for South East Asia of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), Mr. Harro Wittermans, highlighted the strong and effective network that has developed throughout the region over the years, also manifested by the appointment of the CBRN National Focal Points of the partner countries, who were invited to join the celebration.

To showcase the capabilities of the Philippines to respond to a possible CBRN incident, a live multi-agency response demonstration took place on the Malacañang grounds involving the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine General Hospital (PGH). The demonstration was coordinated by General Jose Embang Jr., Director of Operations at the National Headquarters of the Bureau of Fire Protection and CBRN National Focal Point for the Philippines.

The EU CBRN Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative (CBRN CoE)

The CBRN Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence are an initiative of the European Union (EU), funded and implemented by the European Commission through its international cooperation Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) in close coordination with the European External Action Service (EEAS). The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and other relevant International/Regional Organisations and regional experts provide their support to ensure coherent and effective national, regional and international cooperation. The initiative currently involves 59 partner countries across 8 regions of the world.

For more information:

EU CBRN Centres of Excellence public website: <http://www.cbrn-coe.eu/>

European Commission, Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace website (see section about "Stable Situations"): <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/node/7350>