

## **8.4 Strengthening SEA Region EMTs for Health Emergency Response**

Thank you Chair.

Government of India appreciates the WHO's Global Emergency Medical Teams (EMT) initiative, which recognizes the need for standardization and coordinated timely deployment of quality assured EMTs to disaster affected areas.

Government of India also appreciates the works done so far by WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia (SEARO) in mentoring, verifying and classifying the EMTs in member States of the region.

Such an initiative will also strengthen National EMTs and make them self reliant to work in a disaster setting, whether it's at a local/National/Regional or Global scale.

India has a large health work force. Being a disaster prone country, it has ample experience of human resource deployment in emergency settings within the country.

India's civilian and defence health workforce had increasingly contributed, that too significantly, to disaster response in the region in the past decade.

India has also the unique privilege of having such workforce in highly specialized areas such as public health emergency surveillance and response, trauma management, burn management, psychosocial care, high altitude illness and CBRN.

We are of the opinion that standardization of our workforce will greatly contribute to International response to disasters. Thus India has taken this initiative in true spirit and looks forward to contribute several WHO classified EMTs for the Region and beyond.

We have already identified a National EMT focal point in the Ministry of Health and identified a number of potential sources for such team, which could undergo WHO's EMT classification and standardization process.

We have also looked into the challenges in operationalization of the global EMTs, such as mobilization of personnel and equipment to a country that requisitions EMTs, their sustainability in operating in unfamiliar terrains, in particular conflict zones and the cost. We feel that many more such factors needs to be addressed by World Health Organization before making it a global practice. The classification and standardization, is a small beginning in this regard.

We shall be working with all sectors within and outside of Government, including WHO to make this initiative a success.

Thank you.