

CHAIRPERSON'S SUMMARY BY MR ERIC YAP
COMMISSIONER SCDF AT CRISIS MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE 2016
11 NOVEMBER 2016, AT THE SINGAPORE EXPO, MAX ATRIA, LEVEL 2,
PERIDOT ROOMS 202-203

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much. First of all, my heartiest congratulations to Deputy Commissioner Kim from Seoul Fire Department for hosting the next Crisis Management Conference. We certainly look forward to the meeting in Seoul and learn from the experiences of various participating cities in terms of crisis management and disaster management.

I think today's conference has been enriching and intense, particularly having to sit through ten presentations within a day. I'm actually a course participant at the moment at the Civil Service College of Singapore. As we have accepted the invitation to host this conference a year ago, I took myself out of the course to attend this event. The topics discussed today have been diverse, but all are related to crisis and disaster management. The topics range from innovation strategies, lessons learnt to using of future technology to enhance training.

After sitting through all the presentations, I took away four key points, and I think some of these points may resonate with you. "Community Self-Help" and "Mutual Assistance" are the first two points that resonate with me. I can see these points reflected in the Singapore's presentation about how we're going to embrace the concept of a Nation of Life Savers for our vision of 2025. Dr. Subejo has also talked about how Jakarta need to train the local community and the efforts to provide equipment to the community so that they can render immediate aid to each other.

We have also heard from Tokyo Police Department about language and student volunteers. The concept of self-help came through very strongly. I think that the fact is that we are all in the business of crisis response. We deal with emergencies in our day-to-day lives and we know that from the time we receive a call, we are already fighting against time. Some emergency response organisations, like SCDF, require eight minutes to respond to the scene. Some agencies may take 15 minutes. If you are in Jakarta, with the traffic condition, I think it is going to be a challenge. Therefore, community self-help and mutual assistance are critical and can never be overstated.

The third point that resonated with me through the presentations is "Training to be prepared". Let me elaborate this point further. Exercises are one of the ways for organisations to be prepared. In London Fire Brigade's presentation, they shared how Exercise Unified Response took more than two years to plan and eventually when it was conducted, it involved multi agencies and international teams responding together. The conduct of a joint exercise of such scale is definitely elaborate but the lessons learnt and recommendations provided post-exercise are definitely worth the effort. I think that is the true value of an exercise, where systems can be improved if we take it that the end point of the exercise is the start point of many of the things that needs to be done.

New Taipei City spoke about overseas joint trainings in their presentation. I think this is something that means a lot for us because we firmly believe in training alongside foreign counterparts. Joint trainings can help to bring our skills and operations to a new level as our people can learn new methods and knowledge when we conduct training together.

My last point is about “embracing technology” and this is shown in the presentation on the Integrated Command Training Centre (ICTC) by Seoul. I think tapping on virtual reality for training is truly embracing technology. It pushes the boundaries to areas that we may have difficulties reaching if we rely on conventional methods. I spoke to Peter from London Fire Brigade over lunch that emergencies are dynamic in modern society and there are many constraints that countries like Singapore are facing. One of the biggest constraints that we face is the dwindling workforce. There is also a public demand for our workforce to deliver more. It is thus a constraint for us when an emergency situation occurs. This is the time when technology, such as virtual reality technology, can offer us.

Yesterday some of us had the opportunity to visit the Civil Defence Academy and the Home Team Tactical Centre. That is the latest training institution that SCDF has jointly developed with our Police Force counterparts. The new centre at Mandai gives us the capacity to shift our training load to another base and hence enable us to redevelop the Civil Defence Academy, which you saw. The entire field training area of the Civil Defence Academy is actually underutilised by plot ratio. A lot of our training at Civil Defence Academy are actually interrupted by lightning activities. The plan is to build high rise structures and training facilities in each of these levels that offer virtual reality type of training and standard burning training to provide a more realistic training of our firefighters.

Our keynote speaker, Pak Said Faisal has shared in his presentation of the ASEAN response mechanism and the planning processes that goes into the SOP, the forward deployment bases where logistics can be placed so that in the event of crisis, the emergency stockpile can be pushed out very quickly to the situations. These are all known scenarios and unknown scenarios that we know so we can plan for it.

To conclude, I would like to say that I appreciate this opportunity to interact with the different cities that have come and spent time with us. Tomorrow will be a big day for us where we can see the finals of the Singapore Global Firefighters and Paramedics Challenge, and I invite every one of you to come and witness the event. It is electrifying, the atmosphere, if you talk to Pak Said Faisal he will tell you, he is coming back here for the 3rd year and each year he says he sees something new and this is truly what it is and it can happen this way because all of us belongs to one fraternity, you know, and this is the Emergency Response fraternity. We believe in a mission of making sure that the people who are in distress gets the best service possible.

So on this note, I thank you for your presence here for the whole of today and of course for the past day and for the next day as well. After this event, we will have a dinner and following the dinner I hope that there will be some time for you to catch some glimpses of Singapore skyline. I wish you a very good evening ahead. Thank you.