

*The following statement released by the ASEAN Secretariat first appeared on their website (<http://www.aseansec.org/26023.htm>) on 15 March 2011 entitled "ASEAN Extends a Helping Hand in Hours of Need":*

To help Japan recover from the recent natural disasters, aid is pouring in from all corners of the world, along with ASEAN.

“Helping hands from ASEAN Member States were extended the moment the earthquake and tsunami hit our friend, Japan. As a wise and well-managed government, even in times of extreme stress, Japan is ensuring a well-coordinated and productive support to her people,” stated the Secretary-General of ASEAN, Dr Surin Pitsuwan.

ASEAN Member States’ assistance has been offered in various forms, including cash, medical assistance, food, rescue efforts and more.

Cambodia has contributed USD 100,000 for the relief of the victims.

Indonesia’s *Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Bencana* (National Board for Disaster Management) is going to deploy a 64-person trained Quick Response Team, equipped with medical supplies. The team includes the Indonesian Armed Forces, search and rescue team, and medical team.

Lao PDR has also provided USD 100,000 in emergency relief and agreed to set up a national committee to raise more funds and to be ready to dispatch personnel.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council of the Philippines is ready to deploy search and rescue contingent. The Philippines is set to send more, if required.

The Singapore Civil Defence Force's Operation Lion Heart contingent has also been activated. It consists of five search specialists and search dogs each.

As for Thailand, the world's largest rice exporter, it has approved 15,000 tonnes of rice and over USD 6.5 million of assistance.

Viet Nam, meanwhile, has decided to provide Japan with USD 200,000 and ready to send a medical team upon request.

"These are the responses from ASEAN Member States we have ascertained so far. ASEAN is ready to provide more support, assistance and contributions as identified by Japan. The Member States will continue to be in close contact with Japan to ensure efficient mobilisation of reliefs, the Secretary-General added. This is a region coming together to help its neighbour and a key Dialogue Partner in dire need."

ASEAN people residing in Japan have also been in the hearts and minds of their governments. ASEAN Member States have sent or are sending teams to affected areas to check the condition of their citizens and extend assistance offering health care, relief goods such as food and water and other support.

"Japan is facing this situation with mastered organisation and dedication to the public's well being," Dr Surin concluded. "As always, I am confident the people of Japan will again demonstrate to us their ability to turn a difficult situation into a strength."