



Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**Seventieth session**

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Item 3(f) of the provisional agenda *

**Review of issues pertinent to the subsidiary structure of
the Commission, including the work of the regional
institutions: Disaster risk reduction****Report of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction on
its third session***Summary*

The Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction held its third session in Bangkok from 27 to 29 November 2013. The Committee emphasized that building resilience to natural disasters is one of the most pressing contemporary challenges facing Asia and the Pacific. In that regard, the Committee underscored the importance of mainstreaming disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into planning and finance ministries, and the work of relevant sectoral ministries. It also emphasized the importance of space and geographic information systems applications in disaster risk reduction and disaster response.

The Committee recommended action by the Commission in several matters, including: (a) requesting the secretariat to prepare a regional strategy for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development plans; (b) requesting the secretariat to work towards monitoring the resilience of member States to disasters, including through the development of a core set of disaster-related statistics in close coordination with the Committee on Statistics; (c) strengthening regional support to assist member States in using space-based information for supporting disaster risk reduction, impact assessment and reconstruction, and drought monitoring and early warning, through the Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development; and (d) requesting the secretariat to continue to provide near real-time satellite data and imagery to the member States affected by severe disasters.

The Committee also called on member States to consider contributing financial support to the ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries.

The Commission may wish to consider the matters calling for action or brought to its attention that are contained in the present report and provide the secretariat with further guidance.

* E/ESCAP/70/L.1/Rev.1.

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I. Matters calling for action by the Commission or brought to its attention

1. The Committee recommends that the Commission adopt the draft resolution on disaster risk reduction that Japan has indicated it will sponsor at the seventieth session of the Commission. The resolution will further enhance regional cooperation and articulate a strong voice for the Asia-Pacific region at the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, to be held in Sendai, Japan, in 2015.

2. The Committee expresses appreciation to the secretariat for its efforts to assist member States in addressing disaster risks in Asia and the Pacific through policy analysis, regional advisory services and capacity-building initiatives. In this regard, the Committee requests that the secretariat continue to support member States in their efforts, including the implementation of Commission resolution 69/12 on enhancing regional cooperation for building resilience to disasters in Asia and the Pacific.

3. The Committee notes with appreciation the work of the secretariat in promoting the use of space technology and geographic information systems (GIS) as part of its support for member States in the area of disaster risk reduction, and requests the secretariat to continue assisting member States in their efforts to further implement resolution 69/11 on the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Plan of Action for Applications of Space Technology and

Geographic Information Systems for Disaster Risk Reduction and Sustainable Development, 2012-2017.¹ The Committee notes with appreciation the efforts made by Mongolia and Sri Lanka to pilot the Asia-Pacific Plan of Action.

4. The Committee expresses its appreciation for the ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries and recommends that the secretariat continue the valuable activities of the Trust Fund. In this regard, it calls on member States to consider contributing financial support for the Trust Fund.

5. Noting the existing gaps in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development processes and governance structures, the Committee requests that the secretariat prepare a relevant regional strategy and submit it to the Committee for consideration. In this regard, the Committee notes the importance of boosting investment in disaster risk reduction and not wavering in efforts to develop infrastructure for disaster reduction and thus calls on the secretariat to assist member States, upon request, in the integration of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into planning, finance and the work of relevant sectoral ministries through, among other things, capacity-building.

6. To strengthen evidence-based policymaking, the Committee requests that the secretariat work towards monitoring more effectively the resilience of member States to disasters, including through the development of a core set of disaster-related statistics in close coordination with the Committee on Statistics. The Committee calls on the secretariat to align this work, to the greatest extent possible, with the disaster risk reduction framework beyond 2015.

7. The Committee recommends that the secretariat further strengthen its efforts in Central Asia, especially by: (a) broadening the coverage of the Regional Cooperative Mechanism for Drought Monitoring and Early Warning; (b) supporting the expansion of products and services provided by the Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia; and (c) linking the existing disaster risk reduction centres in Bishkek and Almaty with similar centres in Asia and the Pacific.

8. The Committee recommends closer collaboration between the WMO/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones and the ESCAP/WMO Typhoon Committee to build synergy and share knowledge and experience, and calls on the two platforms to support the implementation of the World Meteorological Organization's Global Framework for Climate Services.

9. Mindful of the ongoing global consultations on the development agenda beyond 2015, the Committee notes that disaster risk reduction should be further integrated into the global development agenda. The Committee also notes that the disaster risk reduction agenda beyond 2015 should address the specific needs and priorities of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, and requests that the secretariat support efforts to further this goal.

10. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the secretariat for the timely provision of near real-time satellite data and imagery to the member States affected by severe disasters and requests that these services be continued. The Committee requests that the secretariat strengthen regional support to assist member States in using space-based information for supporting disaster risk reduction, impact assessment and reconstruction,

¹ E/ESCAP/69/25, annex II.

through the Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development (RESAP).

11. Recognizing that there are still considerable gaps and unmet needs in space technology and GIS applications for addressing disaster risk reduction in member States, particularly in high-risk and low-capacity developing countries, the Committee requests that the secretariat support the member States, upon request, in enhancing their capacity, taking into account national specificities and needs.

12. Noting that droughts have long-term adverse socioeconomic impacts on the countries affected, the Committee commends the secretariat for operationalizing the Regional Cooperative Mechanism for Drought Monitoring and Early Warning under the RESAP framework. The Committee notes with appreciation that the service nodes of the mechanism have been put in place in China and India for the provision of space-based data and products to drought-prone countries, starting with the pilot in Mongolia and to be extended to Cambodia, Myanmar and Sri Lanka as requested by those countries. The mechanism will offer customized geo-referenced satellite data, drought products and services emanating from the constellations of earth observation satellites to enhance the capacity of drought-prone countries for more efficient monitoring, early warning and drought mitigation.

13. The Committee notes with appreciation the continued support from member States in the provision of space-based information, products and services, capacity development, technology and experience on space technology and GIS applications for disaster risk reduction.

14. The Committee recommends that the secretariat continue: (a) to facilitate policy development; (b) to document lessons learned and good practices; (c) to encourage knowledge sharing; (d) to develop guidelines and toolkits; and (e) to promote regional cooperation in the areas of mainstreaming, integrating disaster risk reduction into climate change adaptation, and applications of space technology and GIS. In this respect, the Committee requests that the secretariat further strengthen the Asia-Pacific Gateway for Disaster Risk Management and Development through partnerships with other disaster risk reduction portals and regional organizations.

15. The Committee takes note of the suggestion by the delegation of Bangladesh for ESCAP to establish, in Bangladesh, a research and training institute as a centre of excellence in disaster management. The Committee also takes note of the request by the delegation of Nepal for the secretariat to organize, in Kathmandu, a regional multi-stakeholder dialogue to jointly develop strategies for addressing ways to finance the integration of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into development.

16. The Committee takes note of the request by the delegation of the Philippines that through the RESAP regional cooperative mechanism, partner countries and other relevant organizations will continue to assist disaster-affected countries in terms of providing remote-sensing data, pre- and post-disaster maps, capacity-building and other services until significant recovery has been attained in the affected areas.

17. The Committee takes note of the request that the secretariat explore the feasibility of organizing a special session on disaster risk reduction in Central Asia at the seventieth session of the Commission. The Committee also takes note of a request that the secretariat create a fund for humanitarian emergencies response in view of the recurring and multiple disasters in the region.

18. The Committee requests that the secretariat enhance collaboration with its strategic partners in the United Nations system and related global/regional organizations and initiatives in order to promote the synergic impact of activities and programmes and to pool expertise and resources. In this regard, the Committee appreciates the secretariat applying a “One UN” approach in organizing the current session of the Committee and recommends that the secretariat continue promoting this approach to improve regional-level inter-agency coordination.

II. Proceedings

A. Mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development strategies

19. The Committee had before it the documents entitled “Building resilience to disasters: mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development strategies” (E/ESCAP/CDR(3)/1) and “Disaster databases for development planning” (E/ESCAP/CDR(3)/INF/4). The deliberations on the agenda item consisted of a panel discussion and country statements.

20. The Committee benefited from a panel discussion comprised of the following panellists: Lieutenant General (Ret.) Nadeem Ahmed, former Chief of National Disaster Management Agency, Pakistan; Mr. Suprayoga Hadi, Deputy Minister for the Development of Special Region, Ministry for the Development of Disadvantaged Regions, Indonesia; and Ms. Caitlin Wiesen, Regional Manager, United Nations Development Programme, Asia-Pacific Regional Centre. Key recommendations from the expert group meeting on Strategies Towards Building Resilience to Disasters in Asia and the Pacific were provided. Statements were made by the representatives of the following countries: China; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Fiji; India; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kyrgyzstan; Philippines; and Russian Federation. Representatives of the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre (ADRC) and the International Recovery Platform (IRP) also made statements.

21. The Committee noted that impacts of natural disasters hampered poverty reduction efforts and might roll back progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Committee also noted that rapid urbanization and population growth contributed to higher levels of exposure and vulnerability, with compounding effects on the poorest and most vulnerable members of society. In that regard, the Committee recognized the importance of building resilience to disasters by mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development processes and governance at all levels. To that end, the Committee noted the need for a holistic approach to mainstream disaster risk reduction with a robust policy framework, institutional mechanisms and sufficiently funded programmes.

22. The Committee noted the progress made by member States in the areas of monitoring and early warning, capacity-building, community-based disaster risk reduction, information and communications technology (ICT) for disaster risk reduction, including the application of space technology and geographic information systems (GIS), and the integration of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into development processes. One delegation expressed support for the secretariat’s work related to public-private partnerships for disaster risk reduction.

23. The Committee took note of issues that hampered the effective mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into development strategies. They included, but were not limited to, lack of political drive and ownership, the tendency to allocate more resources for response and reconstruction efforts

rather than risk reduction and financial constraints. Gaps in coordination among planning and finance ministries, disaster management agencies and local/sectoral authorities were noted as hindering mainstreaming efforts.

24. The Committee discussed the critical need for a common set of indicators and parameters for monitoring resilience, including a core set of disaster-related statistics, to provide the basis for evidence-based policymaking for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction and facilitating benchmarking across countries.

25. The Committee noted the importance of advocacy through multisectoral consultative or coordinative forums, such as national platforms, a mainstreaming reference group or other purpose-specific working groups. The Committee also underlined the importance of securing the position of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, and associated targets in the development agenda beyond 2015.

26. The Committee recognized several complementing elements, including community-based disaster risk reduction, public-private partnerships and the role of technology, including ICT, space technology and GIS.

27. The Committee recognized maintenance of critical infrastructure and investing in “building back better” during the reconstruction phase as strategic opportunities for mainstreaming.

28. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran informed the Committee of progress made with regard to the implementation of resolution 67/4 on the establishment of the Asian and Pacific centre for the development of disaster information management, and announced that the Centre would co-organize with the secretariat two subregional workshops and one regional expert group meeting in 2014.

B. Strategies in disaster risk reduction, including those related to climate change adaptation, for sustainable development

29. The Committee had before it the documents entitled “Integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation for sustainable development” (E/ESCAP/CDR(3)/2), “Strengthening early warning for coastal hazards through the ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries” (E/ESCAP/CDR(3)/3) and “Climate information and services: the role of the Typhoon Committee and the Panel on Tropical Cyclones” (E/ESCAP/CDR(3)/INF/5). The deliberations on the agenda item consisted of a panel discussion and country statements.

30. The Committee benefited from a panel discussion comprised of the following panellists: Mr. Munir Chowdhury, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, Bangladesh; Mr. Manasa Tagicakibau, Director, National Disaster Management Office, Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management, Fiji; and Mr. Henk Verbeek, Acting Deputy Regional Director, United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. Statements were made by the representatives of following countries: Cambodia; Maldives; Myanmar; Nepal; India; and Iran (Islamic Republic of). Representatives of the ESCAP/WMO Typhoon Committee and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme also made statements.

31. The Committee noted that Asia and the Pacific was vulnerable to multiple and overlapping risks from natural disasters, climate change and socioeconomic shocks. Small island developing States had experienced a high frequency and increasing intensity of hydro-meteorological extreme events and geophysical hazards that continually threatened people's lives and livelihoods. In that regard, the Committee recognized that maintaining the status quo was not sufficient and emphasized the need to undertake disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in a holistic and integrated manner.

32. The Committee recognized that poverty eradication and environmental protection were overriding priorities for sustainable development, requiring joint efforts from Governments, international, regional and local organizations and other stakeholders. Some delegations underlined the link between environmental degradation and disaster risk, and stressed the need for building resilience in view of the increasing frequency of extreme events. In that regard, the use of ecosystem management had been recognized as an effective tool for integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

33. The Committee noted with satisfaction the agreement on integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation reached at the 2013 Joint Meeting of the Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management and Pacific Climate Change Roundtable² and good practices in some countries.

34. The Committee expressed concern that, in many countries, efforts towards integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation were hindered by fragmented, parallel or overlapping policies, institutional arrangements, plans and funding.

35. In that regard, the Committee recognized the importance of and the need for adequate information, clarity of policy framework, coherent planning and coordinated programmes, as well as adequate financing and monitoring, technology transfer, and strengthened capacity for building resilience.

36. The Committee acknowledged the importance of strengthening connectivity and information management, particularly with regard to risk assessment and analysis, climate forecasting, hazard monitoring, early warning and emergency communication.

37. The Committee further recognized that empowering local governments, increasing local capacity in carrying out informed decision-making, and community-based risk reduction were among the key elements for the successful integration of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

38. The Committee was informed of the importance of governance that includes coordinating the various stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and regional and international organizations, to ensure the optimization of resources, avoid duplication and reduce adverse impacts.

39. The Committee noted that migration was a climate adaptation option taken by certain vulnerable people and thus should be considered in future assessments of the potential impacts of climate change. In that regard, the Committee noted the experience of one country in identifying settlements for populations who were at risk of being displaced by the future impacts of climate change.

² See www.pacificdisasterclimatemeeting2013.net.

40. The Committee noted the progress made in the collaborative efforts of the ESCAP/WMO Typhoon Committee and the WMO/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones in developing Synergized Standard Operating Procedures for Coastal Multi-hazard Early Warning Systems, and welcomed their commitment to continuing to build synergy between those two platforms.

41. The Committee noted with satisfaction the efforts of the secretariat in preparing the *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report* and the background documents for that agenda item.

C. The development agenda beyond 2015 as it pertains to disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific

42. The Committee had before it the document entitled “Disaster risk reduction relating to the development agenda beyond 2015, including issues pertinent to least developed countries and countries with special needs” (E/ESCAP/CDR(3)/4). The deliberations on the agenda item consisted of a panel discussion and country statements.

43. The Committee benefited from a panel discussion comprised of the following panellists: Mr. Masatoshi Yokkaichi, Director for Disaster Preparedness, Public Relations and International Cooperation, Cabinet Office, Japan; Mr. Aditya Bahadur, Research Officer, Overseas Development Institute; and Mr. German Velasquez, Head of Advocacy and Outreach, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR). Statements were made by the representatives of the following countries: Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; Fiji; India; Nepal; and Russian Federation. The representatives of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and UNISDR also made statements.

44. The Committee noted that, in order to prevent disasters from eroding development gains, disaster risk reduction needed to be integrated into the development agenda beyond 2015, including in the areas of poverty eradication, gender, health, education, infrastructure, water and sanitation and agriculture. The Committee noted that adequate integration of disaster risk reduction under the global development agenda had not taken place and requested the secretariat to review possible remedies. The Committee took note of the need for better integration of future Hyogo Framework for Action³ goals and the development agenda beyond 2015.

45. The Committee expressed the view that while the result of the ongoing negotiations on the future Hyogo Framework for Action should not

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