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**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**  
 Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction
**Second session**

Bangkok, 29 June-1 July 2011

**Report of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction on its  
 second session**

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

### **A. Matters calling for action**

#### **Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action**

1. The Committee stresses the importance of speedy implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters.<sup>1</sup> The implementation not only should cover economic and social aspects but also make use of information and communications technology and space technology to enhance disaster preparedness. The secretariat is requested to explore the possibility of enhancing the outreach of early warning systems information and ensuring its successful delivery to end-users through, among other things, the established Asia-Pacific Gateway for Disaster Risk Reduction and Development.

#### **Recent initiatives in the area of disaster risk reduction**

2. The Committee strongly supports the continued implementation by the secretariat of recent ESCAP initiatives in the area of disaster risk reduction, including further development of the Asia-Pacific Gateway for Disaster Risk Reduction and Development, and the Regional Cooperative Mechanism on Disaster Monitoring and Early Warning, Particularly Drought, the two new modules of the Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders, which is the flagship programme of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communications Technology for Development, as well as the publication of the *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2012* in cooperation with the Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and other partners. The Committee recommends that capacity-building, training and outreach activities be carried out to promote the Gateway and other initiatives, build up partnerships, and secure adequate resources, including funding.

#### **Connectivity in the Pacific islands**

3. Cognizant that the Pacific islands face unique difficulties due to their small population, scattered land areas and frequently recurring disasters, the Committee requests that the secretariat continue its efforts to improve Pacific connectivity and access to and use of satellite imagery and that it further assist the Pacific islands with capacity-building in space applications, including telemedicine, e-education, e-governance, and community e-centres with a focus on disaster management.

### **B. Matters brought to the attention of the Commission**

#### **Recent trends in disasters and their socio-economic and environmental aspects**

4. Considering the impact of disasters on societies, the Committee recommends that the development of standards, methodologies and guidelines for disaster statistics be given higher priority by international and regional statistical communities than is currently the case.

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<sup>1</sup> A/CONF.206/6 and Corr.1, chap. I, resolution 2.

5. Aware of the limitations of the Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT), which only records disasters above a particular threshold, the Committee recommends that Governments systematically collect data on small disasters, the aggregated impact of which often exceeds that of large disasters.

6. The Committee requests that the secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme and their development partners increase their support to building national capacities in the collection and analysis of disaster data for hazard and vulnerability assessments, disaster preparedness and mitigation and contingency planning.

7. The Committee also requests that the secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme provide more training on practical disaster assessment methodologies, including on how to conduct disaster assessments more efficiently.

### **Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in Asia and the Pacific**

8. The Committee recommends that the secretariat continue promoting regional cooperative mechanisms and capacity development efforts for disaster risk reduction, including on information, communications and space technologies, to accelerate the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, according due priority to countries with special needs.

9. In view of the importance of mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in economic and social development planning, the Committee recommends that institutional capacity be strengthened through regional cooperation and continued regional advisory services.

### **Enhancing regional cooperation on disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific**

#### *The Asia-Pacific Disaster Report*

10. The Committee endorses the establishment of an advisory board and editorial committee to guide the preparation of the *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2012* and its terms of reference. The Committee recommends that the *Report* continue to feature such elements as economic and social analysis of the impacts of disasters, descriptions of regional cooperation and analysis of the role of space applications and information and communications technology (ICT) in disaster risk reduction, in addition to new elements, such as (a) information on champions for disaster risk reduction, (b) social and psychological analysis, (c) coverage of community practices vis-à-vis global perspectives, (d) analysis of a possible linkage between the Hyogo Framework for Action and the Millennium Development Goals and (e) linkage to the *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction*.

11. The Committee recommends that all stakeholders of disaster risk reduction make full use of the Asia-Pacific Gateway for Disaster Risk Reduction and establish partnerships with the site in order to improve access to information and prevent duplication of work.

## **ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries**

12. The Committee hopes that the ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries becomes a more proactive mechanism to improve regional resilience to disasters and, in that regard, appeals to the international community for additional support.

13. Recognizing that many types of disasters have transboundary effects and can only be predicted and properly mitigated through bilateral, subregional and regional cooperation, the Committee encourages the use of new technology, including satellites, for monitoring disasters and adverse weather conditions to reduce disaster risk.

### **Mainstreaming innovative information and communications technology in disaster risk reduction**

14. The Committee requests that the secretariat accord high priority to capacity-building and training in information and communications technologies, including space-based technologies.

15. The Committee requests that the secretariat take steps to broaden the scope of the work of the ESCAP Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development (RESAP) and to align it better with the core agenda of ESCAP in promoting inclusive and sustainable development.

## **II. Proceedings**

### **A. Agenda item 4**

#### **Recent trends in disasters and their socio-economic and environmental aspects**

16. The Committee had before it two information notes entitled “Importance of disaster risk reduction in achieving the Millennium Development Goals” (E/ESCAP/CDR(2)/INF/4) and “Addressing disaster risk reduction and development through improved data on disasters” (E/ESCAP/CDR(2)/INF/5).

17. A high-level panel discussion on recent trends in disasters and their socio-economic and environmental aspects was held. The panellists were: Mr. Asit Kumar Mukutmoni, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, Bangladesh; Mr. Shankar Prasad Koirala, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Nepal; Ms. Crispina B. Abat, Chief, Planning Division, Office of Civil Defense, Philippines; and Mr. Dugkeun Park, Senior Analyst, National Emergency Management Agency, Republic of Korea. The panel was presided over by the Chair of the Committee and moderated by the Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management of Bangladesh.

18. Mr. Shankar Prasad Koirala discussed the impact of the Koshi floods in 2008 and the livelihood programme launched for the victims. There had been extensive damage to livestock and housing. The damage assessment had been carried out by the Government of Nepal, the Asian Development Bank, and the United Nations Development Programme. The Government had provided a comprehensive compensation package for the victims of the Koshi

floods. The challenges facing Nepal in connection with the Koshi floods included the dependence of communities on humanitarian support during the recovery phase. The Government of Nepal had approved a National Strategy for Disaster Risk Management in 2009.

19. Ms. Crispina B. Abat presented her country's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Framework. The country had shifted its approach from disaster preparedness and response to disaster management in the 1980s, to disaster risk management in the 1990s and to disaster risk reduction as of 2005. The Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act, which had become law in May 2010, had paved the way for the adoption of a disaster risk reduction and management approach that was holistic, integrated and proactive in lessening the socio-economic and environmental impacts of disasters.

20. Mr. Dugkeun Park shared the regional cooperation initiatives taken by the Republic of Korea and emphasized the importance of cooperating as a region to reduce disaster risks. In October 2010, the National Emergency Management Agency of the Republic of Korea had hosted the fourth Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. The Conference had adopted the Incheon Declaration and Regional Roadmap and Action Plan, which was set to be reviewed every six months at meetings of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) Asian Partnership on Disaster Reduction (IAP). He invited partners and countries in the region to participate actively in the implementation of the first regional initiative pertaining to disaster risk reduction through climate change adaptation.

21. Mr. Asit Kumar Mukutmoni described the pressing challenges posed by disasters in the Asian and Pacific region. Socio-economic and environmental impacts of disasters had worsened poverty and inequality, and destroyed the development gains of countries. Noting that disasters were increasing and that, despite lower numbers of fatalities, economic losses had increased, he highlighted the need to coordinate efforts in disaster risk reduction to address the problems posed by increasing disaster risks. As moderator of the high-level panel discussion, he summarized a number of observations for consideration by the Committee.

22. Following the panel discussion, the Committee commenced deliberations on the item.

23. Representatives of the following countries made statements: Mongolia; Pakistan; and Russian Federation.

24. It was pointed out that, in recent years, countries in the region had become prone to more disasters of various types, including floods, drought, desertification, extreme meteorological conditions that adversely affected agricultural activities, snow and dust storms, wildfires, earthquakes and tsunamis, which affected millions of people. The economic damage caused by the disasters had increased accordingly, and the sustainable economic and social development of the countries involved had suffered as a result.

25. Serious concern was expressed about the threats posed by disasters to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and the relevance of introducing disaster risk reduction programmes into development planning was underlined. In that respect, one representative expressed appreciation for the secretariat's introduction of an integrated approach to disaster risk reduction that addressed socio-economic development issues.

26. Several delegations expressed appreciation for the support provided by the international community, including ESCAP, ISDR, UNDP and other United Nations organizations, in disaster risk reduction, and looked forward to further regional cooperation to continue reducing the risks posed by disasters. Support was expressed for the knowledge triangle, which had been proposed by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, for knowledge sharing that was of mutual benefit to China, Indonesia and Pakistan on disaster risk reduction and management, and it was suggested that ESCAP should continue to facilitate such regional collaboration among countries.

27. One delegation noted the presentation of a plan of action pertaining to the development of an effective and efficient international emergency management mechanism at the third session of the Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

28. The Committee acknowledged that making disaster data comparable over time and across different disasters and regions was challenging and that developing countries needed guidance and assistance in building the capacity to compile sound disaster statistics and establish national disaster databases. Coordination between disaster management agencies and statistical offices was also of critical importance.

## **B. Agenda item 5**

### **Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action**

29. The Committee had before it document E/ESCAP/CDR(2)/1, entitled “Integrating disaster risk reduction into social-economic development policies in Asia and the Pacific”, and the background information document E/ESCAP/CDR(2)/INF/8, entitled “Achievements and challenges in implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action in Asia and the Pacific”.

30. Representatives of the following countries made statements: Afghanistan; Bangladesh; Cambodia; China; Indonesia; Japan; Lao People’s Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Mongolia; Nepal; Pakistan; and Russian Federation.

31. The Committee noted the progress made by different countries on developing national policies and institutional arrangements at the provincial and local levels on implementing disaster risk reduction strategies, which considerably strengthened their capacities for building resilience. Recognizing that disaster risk reduction was fundamental for sustainable socio-economic development, the Committee stressed the importance of putting in place suitable strategies, plans and programmes, especially with regard to mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development policies, creating and strengthening national integrated disaster risk reduction mechanisms, and implementing key activities as described in the Hyogo Framework for Action.

32. The Committee noted the challenges faced in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action. One of the key challenges was making disaster data available so that they could be integrated into risk reduction strategies. It noted in particular the challenge related to data constraints on addressing social vulnerability. One representative expressed support for efforts made by the secretariat in collaboration with partner agencies, including the Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the United Nations Development Programme and the

Asian Disaster Reduction Center, in developing regional disaster statistics derived from official governmental sources.

33. The Committee highlighted the importance of mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into economic and social development planning and noted the progress made by several countries in that area. The Committee noted that the lack of institutional capacity had been a constraining factor in several countries, which needed to be supported through regional cooperation efforts. In that respect, the representatives of Afghanistan, Cambodia and Nepal expressed appreciation for the regional advisory services in disaster risk reduction provided by the secretariat.

34. Acknowledging that mainstreaming disaster risk reduction also contributed to the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, the Committee expressed the view that priority should be given to that area and to countries that were considerably behind in implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action.

35. One representative noted that the focus of the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action should not be limited to economic and social aspects but should also address the use of ICT and space technology to enhance disaster preparedness. In that regard, the representative also noted that the Russian Federation had presented a proposal at the third session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction to study how multilateral organizations could use diagnostic and hydrometeorological technologies more effectively in disaster preparedness. The representative also offered to share his country's initiatives on enhancing the safety of power plants, some of which involved the inadmissibility of constructing such installations in areas prone to natural hazards, such as tsunamis.

36. While expressing appreciation for the secretariat's efforts on promoting regional cooperation on space and ICT applications, several representatives highlighted the importance of strengthening capacity to make more effective use of advanced technologies for disaster preparedness, including risk assessment and emergency response. The secretariat's efforts on imparting training to key institutions on post-disaster damage and loss assessment were highly appreciated. One representative expressed profound appreciation for the secretariat's efforts to support his country by sharing knowledge, especially regarding space technology applications to build resilience to floods.

37. Some representatives stressed the need to promote regional cooperative mechanisms and resource-sharing arrangements for disaster risk reduction and climate change risk reduction, including those involving information, communications and space technologies, to improve different types of hazard identification and preparedness planning as well as partnerships and collaboration with regional and subregional organizations.

38. Several representatives requested that the secretariat further enhance partnerships and collaboration with other United Nations entities, such as the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Office for Outer Space Affairs, and with regional and subregional organizations, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) and the Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC), in the area of disaster risk management and risk reduction.

## C. Agenda item 6

### **Enhancing regional cooperation on disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific**

39. The Committee had before it notes by the secretariat on enhancing regional cooperation, knowledge and capacity for disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/CDR(2)/2) and on the ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries (E/ESCAP/CDR(2)/3).

40. Representatives of the following countries made statements: Afghanistan; Bangladesh; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Mongolia; Pakistan; Russian Federation; and Thailand.

41. Representatives of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, the Asian Disaster Reduction Center, the Pacific Islands Telecommunications Association, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction also made statements.

42. The Committee emphasized the importance of effective early warning systems, including timely and effective hydrometeorological forecasting, for preventing and mitigating the impact of disasters. The Committee highlighted the importance of ensuring that early warnings reached and were understood by the end-users. The Committee noted the request of one delegation that the secretariat, other agencies and partner countries provide assistance, including training for personnel, on the establishment of a modern ICT-based early warning system to predict earthquakes and other natural disasters. The same delegation also requested capacity-building assistance in the collection and assessment of disaster data.

43. The Committee noted that the Pacific Islands Telecommunications Association (PITA) had been made the Pacific node of the ESCAP Regional Cooperative Mechanism on Disaster Monitoring and Early Warning, Particularly Drought.

44. The Committee noted with satisfaction the publication of the first *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report*,<sup>2</sup> which had been initiated and jointly prepared by ESCAP and UNISDR. One delegation emphasized the relevance and usefulness of the *Report*, particularly to the Central Asian subregion.

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