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Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction

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**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HYOGO FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION IN
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC: FOLLOW-UP TO THE OUTCOME OF THE
THIRD ASIAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON DISASTER RISK
REDUCTION: FROM THE REGIONAL TO THE
GLOBAL PLATFORM**

(Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda)

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

The present document presents major regional disaster risk reduction initiatives and efforts towards the achievement of the Hyogo Framework for Action in the region and reviews collaborative efforts to address major disasters in the region, such as Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar. It also highlights the outcomes of the Third Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, which was held in Kuala Lumpur from 2 to 4 December 2008, and proposes future work that can be undertaken by ESCAP on regional cooperation in disaster risk reduction in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Committee may wish to review the document and provide the secretariat with guidance on its future strategic direction in the area of disaster risk reduction in the Asia-Pacific region, including possible outputs that could be reflected in the programme of work for 2010-2011. The Committee may also wish to provide guidance on the regional report to the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and on the organization of the next Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction.

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Introduction

1. Disaster risk management has traditionally been focused on response and recovery from disasters, with little attention and few resources dedicated to risk reduction; when such efforts were made, they were not made holistically or integrated into development planning. Countries have now realized that, in order to reduce the long-term effects of disasters, actions have to be taken before disasters happen.

2. Recognizing that disaster risk reduction is a cross-cutting issue of great complexity that requires understanding, knowledge, commitment and action, the Commission adopted resolution 64/1 of 30 April 2008 on the restructuring of the conference structure of the Commission, in which it established the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction. In the same resolution, it also established the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, which addresses information and communications technology (ICT) applications for disaster risk reduction, among other issues. The first session of the Committee on ICT was held in Bangkok from 19 to 21 November 2008.

3. The Commission also adopted resolution 64/2 of 30 April 2008 on regional cooperation in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters in Asia and the Pacific, in which it requested the Executive Secretary of ESCAP to work closely with the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, in particular the regional office for Asia and the Pacific, in supporting the implementation of the

Hyogo Framework for Action in the region, including the organization of the biennial Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

4. The resolutions mandate the strengthening of the role and capacity of ESCAP in the area of disaster risk reduction and request the ESCAP secretariat, inter alia, to facilitate the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in the Asia-Pacific region.

5. The present document presents major initiatives in disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific and describes good practices in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in some countries in the region and exemplary collaborative efforts to address major disasters. The second part of the document highlights the outcomes of the Third Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, which was held in Kuala Lumpur from 2 to 4 December 2008, and looks at potential actions ESCAP could take to promote regional cooperation and further improve disaster risk reduction in the region, including with regard to the regional report to the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and the organization of the next Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction.

I. DISASTERS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

A. Asia and the Pacific: a region at risk

6. The Asia-Pacific region is one of the most vulnerable to natural disasters, experiencing a wide variety of natural hazards, including floods, cyclones, earthquakes, droughts, storm surges and tsunamis. The region, which is home to 641 million people living in extreme poverty, accounts for a majority of the total number of deaths caused by natural disasters globally and shares a disproportionate burden of the global loss of life from disasters: more than 80 per cent of the casualties from major disasters in the world since the year 2000 have occurred in the Asia-Pacific region and the top 7 of the 10 most affected countries worldwide, in terms of the number of victims, are from this region.¹

7. In the first half of 2008, two major disasters, Cyclone Nargis and the Wenchuan earthquake, resulted in the death of over 225,000 people. During that period, 101 natural disasters were reported, with 229,043 deaths, more than 130 million people affected and over \$34 billion worth of damage, with Asia being the most affected by natural disasters in terms of human (over 228,000 deaths) and economic (more than \$30 billion) impacts, as well as in occurrences.²

8. Water-related disasters (floods and droughts), windstorms and earthquakes are the most lethal disasters in the region. The Global Natural Disaster Risk Hotspots project generated a global disaster risk assessment for two disaster-related outcomes: mortality and economic losses.³ This assessment showed that Asia, in particular East and South Asia, is at high risk for hydrological disasters, droughts and landslides. Tropical cyclones occur more frequently in the Asian and Pacific region than in any other part of the world and are usually accompanied by severe flooding.

¹ Data on casualties are from the Emergency Events Database of the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters database. (www.emdat.be).

² D. Guha-Sapir, "2008 First semester balance", in Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, *CRED CRUNCH*, No. 14, "Disaster Data: A Balanced Perspective" (Brussels, September 2008).

³ See www.ldeo.columbia.edu/chrr/research/hotspots.

9. Table 1 illustrates the intensity of damage in the region. Compared to more developed countries, most disasters in the region have a higher number of casualties and low financial damage in absolute terms, but still quite an important figure as a share of GDP.

Table 1. Comparison of damage from natural disasters

Disaster occurrence	Country	Number of deaths	Estimated financial loss	Financial loss as percentage of GDP
India Ocean tsunami, 2004	Sri Lanka	> 31 000	\$1.3 billion	6.4
Northern Pakistan earthquake, 2005	Pakistan	73 338	\$5.2 billion	4.7
Cyclone Sidr, 2007	Bangladesh	4 234	\$2.3 billion	3.4
Niigata/Chūetsu earthquake, 2004	Japan	40	\$28 billion	0.6
Wenchuan earthquake, 2008	China	87 476	\$20 billion	0.6
Cyclone Nargis, 2008	Myanmar	138 366	\$4.1 billion	21

Sources: Number of deaths and estimated financial loss data are from the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters Emergency Events Database (www.emdat.be). GDP data are from the World Bank according to the United States dollar value for the corresponding year (<http://web.worldbank.org>).

Notes: ^a GDP data are from 2007.

^b Tripartite Core Group, *Post-Nargis Joint Assessment* (July 2008), p. 20.

10. In addition, the impacts of climate change will be particularly acute in Asian and Pacific countries. Climate variability and extreme events pose significant challenges for economic sectors in the region—such as agriculture, water resources, health and tourism—endangering food security, accelerating the erosion of coastal zones and increasing the intensity of natural disasters, therefore impeding national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

11. While it is difficult to predict how climate change will evolve, scientists anticipate that, by 2050, more than a billion people in Asia could be affected by a decline in the availability of freshwater, particularly in large river basins. Glacier melt in the Himalayas will increase flooding and rock avalanches and affect water resources in the next two to three decades. Coastal areas, especially heavily populated delta regions, will be at risk of increased flooding. Small island States are particularly vulnerable to climate change, in particular to rises in sea level and threats to their freshwater resources. Increased activity in areas affected by droughts and intense tropical cyclone activity are likely in the future and heavy precipitation events are very likely, with increases in frequency for most areas.⁴

B. Major regional disaster risk reduction initiatives in Asia and the Pacific

12. The World Conference on Disaster Reduction called for regional organizations to undertake actions to advance disaster risk reduction within their mandates, priorities and resources. Since the adoption of the Hyogo Framework for

⁴ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, “Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis, Summary for Policymakers”, Working Group I (Paris, February 2007).

Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters,⁵ disaster risk reduction has increasingly figured as a development policy priority in Asia and the Pacific. A range of stakeholders—including United Nations agencies, multilateral organizations, non-governmental organizations and donors—is involved in disaster risk reduction at the regional level. The following paragraphs briefly describe major regional and subregional initiatives on disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific and their recent development.⁶

13. The Commission, in its resolution 64/1 of 30 April 2008, established a new Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction, which will address core issues such as policy options and strategies on multi-hazard disaster risk reduction and mitigation; regional cooperation mechanisms for disaster risk management, including space and other technical support systems; and multi-hazard assessment, preparedness, early warning and response to disaster risks. In the same resolution, the Commission also established a new Committee on Information and Communications Technology, which will address issues of ICT applications for disaster risk reduction. The ESCAP secretariat is also mandated by Commission resolution 64/2 of 30 April 2008 to support regional cooperation in disaster risk reduction, including through the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in the Asian and Pacific region. In response to the need for an effective regional disaster preparedness mechanism, the Multi-Donor Voluntary Trust Fund on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangements in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia, which is administered by ESCAP, was established in late 2005.⁷ The Fund supports a number of countries in areas such as the development of multi-hazard early warning systems, standard operating procedures for disasters and community preparedness.

14. The United Nations Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR)⁸ serves as the focal point in the United Nations system for the coordination of disaster reduction and to ensure synergies among the disaster reduction activities of the United Nations system and regional organizations and activities in the socio-economic and humanitarian fields.⁹ It also serves as an international information clearing house on disaster reduction, developing awareness campaigns and producing publications and promotional materials related to disaster reduction. ESCAP and the UN/ISDR regional office for Asia and the Pacific expect to establish a joint regional team in early 2009 to implement joint activities in the region.

15. The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR)¹⁰ Asian Partnership on Disaster Reduction (IAP) was established in 2003 to strengthen regional cooperation in moving the agenda of disaster risk reduction forward. It initially comprised the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, the Asian Disaster Reduction Center, ESCAP, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Regional Centre in Bangkok and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. IAP was expanded in 2007 and now includes some 30 entities. Among them are United Nations bodies, national and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and donor agencies. IAP is an informal multi-stakeholder forum that provides inputs to the

⁵ A/CONF.206/6 and Corr.1, chap. I, resolution 2.

⁶ E/ESCAP/INF/5 also provides a list of mechanisms through which institutions and individuals in the region exchange information related to disaster risk reduction.

⁷ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2006, Supplement No. 19* (E/2006/39-E/ESCAP/1390), paras. 108, 218 and 324.

⁸ Established by General Assembly resolution 54/219, para. 4.

⁹ See General Assembly resolution 56/195, para. 6.

¹⁰ See General Assembly resolution 54/219, para. 3.

Asian ministerial conferences and other forums on issues related to disaster risk reduction.

16. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Committee on Disaster Management is guided by the ASEAN Regional Programme on Disaster Management, which provides a framework for cooperation for the period 2004-2010.¹¹ The Regional Programme aims to: (a) be implemented in subregional clusters, as appropriate; (b) build synergies with ongoing disaster management programmes undertaken by international and regional organizations; and (c) work in partnership with existing entities that are already functioning in a hazard-specific or thematic sector. ASEAN contributed significantly to the post-disaster response in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis in May 2008 by helping to build trust and cooperation between the Government of Myanmar and the international community.

17. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) provides a platform for South Asian cooperation to advance economic and social development through its Integrated Programme of Action. The SAARC Centre for Disaster Management and Preparedness was established in 2005 in New Delhi and the SAARC Comprehensive Framework on Disaster Management was adopted in 2006. The Framework provides a platform for South Asian countries to establish and strengthen the regional disaster management system, develop country and regional priorities for action and implement regional programmes.¹²

18. The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) held the Third ECO International Conference on Disaster Risk Management in Tehran on 7 and 8 October 2008. The conference focused on a range of relevant issues, including droughts, climate change and flooding, seismic risk reduction, disaster risk management (institutions, legislation, regulations, tools and technology), keeping hospitals safe from disasters and ECO regional cooperation. The Conference drew up a set of recommendations to be submitted to the next ECO ministerial meeting.

19. The Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) provides assistance to promote sustainable development in 20 Pacific countries.¹³ It supports disaster risk reduction as part of the recently adopted Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Framework for Action 2005-2015: An Investment for Sustainable Development in Pacific Island Countries—Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters. Specific activities include strengthening the National Disaster Management Offices, the provision of disaster and risk management training, and the promotion of the Environmental Vulnerability Index and the Comprehensive Hazard and Risk Management tool. SOPAC has also developed a regional information base—Pacific Disaster Net—to assist members in the implementation of their national action plans.

20. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) recently launched a campaign on the humanitarian impacts of climate change, focused on disaster risk, which calls for improved disaster preparedness and response measures in the countries that suffer the most from extreme weather events. The OCHA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific aims to strengthen the capacity of Governments and other humanitarian partners to respond more effectively to

¹¹ See the website of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (http://acdm-online.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=12&Itemid=37).

¹² See the SAARC Disaster Management Centre website, "SAARC Disaster Management Framework" (<http://saarc-sdmc.nic.in/framework.asp>).

¹³ See www.sopac.org.

emergencies and to build response capacity in the region by strengthening emergency preparedness. The Regional Office covers 37 countries and 16 territories in the Asia-Pacific region.¹⁴ It collaborates with regional partners, which includes training non-governmental organizations through the Asian Disaster Reduction and Response Network and working with risk reduction partners to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action.

21. In November 2005, the UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok launched the Tsunami Regional Programme on Capacity Building, which supports tsunami-affected countries in: (a) developing information management tools to assess damage at the local level; (b) developing early warning systems at the national level; and (c) offering opportunities for training and learning to national and regional natural disaster experts. It also supports the development of a proactive and forward-looking approach to disaster reduction in the region, opportunities for effective linkages between local and national stakeholders, and global initiatives in risk reduction.¹⁵

22. The Asian Disaster Preparedness Center supports the advancement of safer communities and sustainable development through programmes and projects that reduce the impact of disasters on countries and communities in Asia and the Pacific. Its Regional Consultative Committee on Disaster Management serves as a forum and reporting mechanism through which the progress of the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action is monitored. The Committee advocates dividing the 10-year Framework into 2-year milestones of accomplishments to facilitate a workable implementation for each of the Committee's 26 member countries in Asia and the Pacific.¹⁶

23. The Asian Disaster Reduction Center, which has 27 member countries from Asia, supports information-sharing on disaster risk reduction, human resources development and the strengthening of community capabilities to enhance disaster resilience in member countries. Specific activities include the provision of information on disasters, the disaster preparedness of member countries and good practices, and the promotion of the Global unique disaster IDentifier (GLIDE), an identification scheme for disaster events. The Center also actively participates in the Sentinel Asia Project, which aims to build a disaster management support system in the region using earth observation satellites.¹⁷

24. A key regional disaster risk reduction initiative being implemented by the Asian Development Bank centres on insurance schemes. The project looks at creating risk insurance schemes to improve the region's ability to cope with natural disasters. Risk insurance pooling—which refers to risk sharing agreements under which each participant in the group, or pool, assumes a specified portion of risk—has been adopted by many developed countries in the region but is a relatively new initiative for developing nations.

25. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies established an Asia Pacific Service Centre and four regional delegations. The Service Centre has a disaster management unit and a regional logistics unit, which focus on preparing national societies to respond collectively to disasters. The regional disaster management units within the regional delegations undertake a wide range of activities to strengthen the capacity of Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies to

¹⁴ See <http://ochaonline.un.org/Default.aspx?alias=ochaonline.un.org/roap>.

¹⁵ See <http://regionalcentrebangkok.undp.or.th/practices/cpr/rpcb>.

¹⁶ For additional information, see www.adpc.net.

¹⁷ See www.adrc.or.jp.

implement disaster risk management programmes in line with the global framework and regional priorities.

26. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the World Health Organization and other United Nations specialized agencies—together with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones, the ESCAP/WMO Typhoon Committee, the Mekong River Commission and other subregional organizations—significantly committed to regional projects in disaster risk management within their mandates and priorities.¹⁸

C. Regional implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action

27. The Hyogo Framework for Action was adopted by the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan, in January 2005. It seeks to achieve a substantial reduction in disaster losses in terms of lives and social, economic and environmental assets. The Hyogo Framework proposes five priorities for action: (a) ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation; (b) identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning; (c) use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels; (d) reduce the underlying risk factors; and (e) strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.

28. Since its adoption, progress in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action has been made at the national, regional and international levels. This progress includes increased commitments by Governments, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders and, in some cases, dedicated investments in disaster risk reduction by Governments, with the support of the international community.

29. The UN/ISDR regional unit for Asia and the Pacific produced the *Interim Regional Synthesis Report on HFA Implementation in Asia and the Pacific* in November 2008.¹⁹ The report covers the period June 2007 to September 2008 and is based on national, regional and thematic Hyogo Framework for Action progress reports that were available at the time. The regional progress reviews were intended to include an assessment of overall trends in national progress across the respective subregions. To cover some key thematic dimensions, reports were also invited from international and regional partners and networks in the areas of early warning, response and preparedness, recovery, education, health, gender, risk assessment,

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