

**Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction**  
**Second Session**  
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**Geneva**

**Statement of the**  
**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)**

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On behalf of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, I join others in congratulating the organizers and host of the Second Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Asia remained the most affected continent by natural disasters. In 2008, nine of the top 10 countries with the highest number of disaster-related deaths were in Asia. A person living in the region is 4 times more likely to be affected by natural disasters than someone living in Africa and 25 times more likely than someone living in Europe or North America. Among the most serious disasters were earthquakes, typhoons and floods. The death toll of over 235,000 people in 2008 was mainly caused by two major disasters in Asia: cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and the Sichuan earthquake in China. Asia is also the most severely affected continent, with 12 million people affected by desertification and drought.

ESCAP has extensive experience in working on the integration of disaster risk management into socio-economic development process. For more than five decades, ESCAP convened intergovernmental meetings to adopt regional strategies in various areas of disaster reduction and helped establish several regional cooperative mechanisms: the Mekong River Commission, which developed flood management strategies and programmes for the Lower Mekong Basin since 1957; the ESCAP/WMO Typhoon Committee, since 1968, and the WMO/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones, since 1971, which promoted the use of early warning systems for cyclones; the Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific (RESAP) since 1994, which supported developing countries to address, among others, disaster risk management.

Since 2005, ESCAP administers a Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami Early Warning in the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia. The Governments of Thailand, Sweden, Turkey and Nepal have provided financial support, and a number of UN agencies are partners. Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations can apply to the Fund. ESCAP recently published a 2009 Report on Regional Unmet Needs in Tsunami Early Warning Systems, copies of which are available at the IAP booth. While the Fund already adopts a multi-hazard approach, a broadened scope is now being considered that would include overall disaster and climate preparedness in the core areas of support.

ESCAP contributed to the ISDR Asia Partnership (IAP) since its inception, developed with the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre a thematic report for the IAP for the overall HFA review process of the region besides other regional activities, and supported UNISDR in organizing the Third Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction that was held in Kuala Lumpur in December 2008.

ESCAP remains committed to work with all partners and broaden its involvement in disaster risk reduction regionally. More than ever, there is need for a strong regional platform to respond to regional and global issues and to assist developing countries cope with the increasing trends of disasters.

The establishment of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction in ESCAP in 2008 in response to a request by ESCAP Member States to integrate disaster risk reduction with development is an important first step towards building regional consensus and taking action on a range of regional disaster challenges. The attendance and support of the Director of the UN/ISDR secretariat at the first session of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction in March 2009 was much appreciated.

In addition, the Committee on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) was also established in 2008 to address, among other ICT issues in the region, the area of ICT for disaster risk reduction. ICT, including space-based technology, has become indispensable throughout the whole process of disaster management. ESCAP is promoting the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response with UNOOSA, and with regional space-faring countries a disaster management support system in the Asia-Pacific region - Sentinel Asia - and a regional cooperative mechanism for drought monitoring and early warning.

The Commission, at its 65<sup>th</sup> Session in April 2009, supported the recommendations of the Committees to establish an Asia Pacific Gateway for disaster risk reduction and development. The gateway will be a platform for information sharing and partnerships to assist countries with innovative policies and programmes that deliver economic and social benefits and to ensure that risk reduction and climate change adaptation are integrated with development. This regional cooperation platform will involve disaster risk reduction as well as development planning and climate change policy makers to ensure that disaster risk reduction is an integral part of both the development and climate change agendas. ESCAP will also produce a biannual Asia-Pacific disaster report together with key partners to provide economic and social analysis of disasters, evaluate the regional trends, and identify good practices and future priorities.

ESCAP's strategy in disaster risk reduction recognizes the need to strengthen regional cooperation to formulate regional perspectives, facilitate collective efforts and actions required for disaster risk reduction in the Asia-Pacific region.

ESCAP will continue working with all regional and global partners for a much needed comprehensive, regional disaster risk reduction strategy that is integrated with an inclusive, sustainable development agenda for the Asia-Pacific region.

Thank you.