



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction

First session
25-27 March 2009
Bangkok

**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.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Introduction.....	2
I. DISASTERS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC.....	3
A. Asia and the Pacific: a region at risk	3
B. Major regional disaster risk reduction initiatives in Asia and the Pacific .	4
C. Regional implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.....	8
D. Response to Cyclone Nargis: a tripartite collaboration	9
II. REGIONAL COOPERATION IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION	12
A. Outcomes of the Third Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction	12
B. Regional network of networks on knowledge sharing and analysis.....	14
C. Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.....	14
D. Preparedness and early warning	15
E. Regional cooperative mechanisms and resource-sharing arrangements....	16
F. Socio-economic assessment of disaster impacts.....	17
G. Partnerships and South-South cooperation.....	17
H. Regional report to the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction	17
I. Next Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction	19
III. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE COMMITTEE.....	19

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.ideo.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, urban risk and environmental risk management.

30. The following paragraphs complement the interim report by describing additional good practices for establishing an enabling environment for more comprehensive disaster risk reduction in some countries of the region.

31. Bangladesh set a model for cost-effective investment in disaster risk reduction. In 1970, the Bhola cyclone caused 300,000 deaths in Bangladesh. On 29 April 1991, another cyclone of the same intensity resulted in 138,000 deaths. In

¹⁸ E/ESCAP/CDR/INF/5 lists over 100 initiatives and networks working for disaster management as part of the preliminary ESCAP survey.

¹⁹ UN/ISDR, *Regional Synthesis Report on HFA Implementation in Asia and Pacific, Interim Report: July 2007-September 2008*, Consultation Draft (November 2008).

November 2007, cyclone Sidr killed 4,234 people.²⁰ This massive reduction in the number of victims is the benefit of the disaster risk reduction and early warning system that was progressively set up in the aftermath of the Bhola cyclone. The country started building cyclone shelters in coastal belts and improving the weather signalling system and pre-disaster planning. The Cyclone Preparedness Program, set up in 1972 and strengthened after the 1991 cyclone, is a community project for disaster preparedness in which 42,000 trained volunteers are involved.²¹ An estimated 40 per cent of the coastal population was evacuated before the landing of cyclone Sidr.²² In 2004, the Government launched a comprehensive disaster management programme, resulting in the National Plan for Disaster Management 2007-2015, an umbrella plan which provides an overall guideline on how to ensure the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction (DRR) across hazards and sectors at all levels and bring a paradigm shift in disaster management from conventional response and relief to a more comprehensive risk reduction culture.

32. Following the 2004 earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean, Indonesia adopted the National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction 2006-2009, followed by a new law on disaster management (Law 24 of 2007). The law established the structure of a national platform for disaster risk management and created the National Disaster Management Agency. The implementation of the provincial boards is still in process. The new law represents the new perspective of disaster management held by the Government, with disaster management actions focused not only on emergency response but also on pre-disaster and post-disaster measures.

33. In the aftermath of the 2005 earthquake of magnitude 7.6 in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan passed the National Disaster Management Ordinance in December 2006, which led to the establishment in March 2007 of the National Disaster Management Commission, which is responsible for policies and the national plan on disaster management, and the National Disaster Management Authority; together they manage all disasters and are enacting a paradigm shift by moving away from a pure response-and-relief oriented approach to a wider perspective that follows the Hyogo Framework for Action vision of a multi-stakeholder and multidisciplinary approach to disaster risk reduction. The National Disaster Risk Management Framework²³ guides the work of all stakeholders and has set up priorities for a five-year period. The Government has secured commitments for the provision of \$58 million to implement the priorities identified by the Framework, which include community and local level programming, a multi-hazard early warning system and the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into development.²⁴

D. Response to Cyclone Nargis: a tripartite collaboration

34. On 2 and 3 May 2008, Cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar. The damage was most severe in the Irrawaddy delta region, where the effects of the extreme winds produced a 3.6-metre storm surge, and Yangon. The death toll was over 138,000. It is estimated that more than a third of the total population in the affected areas, around

²⁰ J-M. Scheuren, O. le Polain de Waroux, R. Below, D. Guha-Sapir and S. Ponserre, *Annual Disaster Statistical Review: The Numbers and Trends 2007* (Brussels, Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, May 2008).

²¹ "Officials: Cyclone warning system reduces casualties in Bangladesh", *China View*, 12 May 2008, accessed from http://rss.xinhuanet.com/newsc/english/2008-05/11/content_8147278.htm on 2 February 2009.

²² See note 20.

²³ Pakistan, *National Disaster Risk Management Framework* (National Disaster Management Authority, February 2007), available at www.ndma.gov.pk/Docs/National.Framework_Full.pdf.

²⁴ Pakistan, "National Strategy for Disaster Management", National Disaster Management Authority, accessed from www.ndma.gov.pk/PlanAhead.html on 2 February 2009.

2.4 million people, was severely affected (in the sense of a loss of livelihood or shelter or another similarly severe loss), with up to 800,000 people displaced from their homes. In addition to the tragic loss of life, the economic damage was significant, estimated at about \$4,057 million, or 21 per cent of GDP. Assets, industrial production and commerce in the largest city of Myanmar, Yangon, and its main agricultural region, the Irrawaddy delta, were severely impacted.²⁵

35. Nargis is the worst natural disaster in the history of Myanmar, the most devastating cyclone to strike Asia since 1991 and the eighth deadliest cyclone of all time.²⁶ While social cohesion is strong and communities have strong capacities for collective problem-solving and decision-making, these vulnerable groups (smallholder farmers, communities dependent on small-scale inshore and offshore fishing, the landless poor who are dependent on wage labour in agriculture and skilled workers) will require urgent assistance in their struggle to revive their livelihood activities, while in the immediate term they will continue to need humanitarian and relief support.

36. On 25 May 2008, ASEAN, the Government of Myanmar and the United Nations established a working-level mechanism—the Tripartite Core Group—to facilitate trust, confidence and cooperation in urgent post-Cyclone Nargis humanitarian relief and recovery work. The Group has become the main mechanism for cooperation between the international community and Myanmar for the coordination of relief efforts to assist Cyclone Nargis survivors. The post-Nargis Joint Assessment (PONJA) was carried out in cooperation with both humanitarian and development actors in Myanmar to determine the full scale of the impact of the cyclone and requirements for both immediate humanitarian assistance needs and medium- to longer-term recovery. PONJA provides a baseline for monitoring progress in recovery and rehabilitation and a basis for recovery planning. The results of PONJA were taken into account by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs when it launched a revised appeal for \$482 million in July 2008.²⁷

37. ASEAN took an active lead in building trust with the Government of Myanmar, in providing assistance and in coordinating the international response in collaboration with the agencies of the United Nations, resulting in many saved lives. The main instrument for ASEAN intervention was the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, which Myanmar has ratified. The Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Group of Friends of Myanmar praised the ASEAN-led humanitarian operations to assist the survivors of Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar as a creative modality to mobilize international resources and goodwill to provide emergency relief and facilitate recovery.²⁸

38. Under the umbrella of the Tripartite Core Group, the humanitarian community is further cooperating with the Government of Myanmar on the Post-Nargis Recovery and Preparedness Plan. This plan is aimed at identifying the longer-term strategies and activities that are required to ensure that the survivors of Cyclone Nargis will not only return to their normal lives, but will also have an opportunity to improve their standards of living.

²⁵ Tripartite Core Group, *Post-Nargis Joint Assessment* (July 2008).

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ ASEAN, “ASEAN-led Humanitarian Operations Praised at the UN’s Friends of Myanmar Meeting”, *ASEAN Bulletin* (September 2008), available at www.aseansec.org/Bulletin-Sep-08.htm.

Box. Disaster lessons from Cyclone Nargis

John Holmes, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, reflected on what can be learned from this crisis:

- “No nation, rich or poor, can go it alone when confronted by a natural disaster of the magnitude of a Cyclone Nargis”;
- Assisting people in crisis is the main goal. “From the first, the aid operation in Myanmar—as is true everywhere we work—had to be about helping vulnerable people in need, not about politics”;
- “Nargis showed us a new model of humanitarian partnership, adding the special position and capabilities of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to those of the United Nations in working effectively with the Government”;
- “Nargis demonstrated once again the importance of disaster risk reduction and preparedness”.

Source: John Holmes, “Disaster lessons” (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 6 August 2008), accessed from [www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/EVOD-7H9HXT?](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/EVOD-7H9HXT?Open+Document) Open Document on 13 January 2008.

39. ESCAP, in its role as the regional liaison of the United Nations system, supported the Secretary-General’s efforts in Myanmar. The Executive Secretary of ESCAP played a catalytic role as a member of the Advisory Group to the Tripartite Core Group. The missions of the Executive Secretary led to a strengthening of trust between the United Nations, and ESCAP in particular, and the Government of Myanmar and supported the efforts of the United Nations country team. They also resulted in a better understanding of the state of damage and response and the longer-term recovery needs of Myanmar and the engagement of ESCAP, and they strategically positioned ESCAP as a key regional player in the medium- to longer-term recovery of Myanmar.

40. On 27 and 28 October 2008, the ESCAP-ASEAN Regional High-level Expert Group Meeting on Post-Nargis Recovery and Livelihood Opportunities in Myanmar was held in Bangkok with the support of the Government of Myanmar. It brought together key partners in the country’s recovery process and experts with experience in dealing with recent disasters in the region to assess how to best strengthen the regional joint efforts to support inclusive and sustainable recovery from Nargis.

41. The Meeting provided a regional-level platform for learning from the experiences of regional and international policy experts so that the best practices emerging from recent disasters in the Asia-Pacific region (the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the 2005 Pakistan earthquake and the 2007 cyclone Sidr) could inform the medium- and long-term post-Nargis recovery strategies, including issues of disaster risk reduction. The Meeting also provided a space for Nargis recovery partners to develop a consensus on priorities and strategies for effectively moving from relief efforts to recovery and longer-term economic and social development, including mobilizing greater technical and financial support.

42. Participants in the meeting agreed on a number of principles to guide the implementation of recovery activities, including the following:

(a) A credible needs assessment is a key foundation for recovery activities and the damage and loss assessment methodology is an important standardized tool providing a comparable means of assessment across the region;

(b) Continuous coordination of funding, programmes and resources is necessary;

(c) The aim for all recovery efforts should be to build back better and more safely, with a community-based approach, in order to reduce future disaster risks;

(d) DRR is an essential pillar of a recovery programme and it should become an integral part of a holistic multidisciplinary approach to disaster management.

43. The benefits of such a partnership were amply demonstrated in the channelling of international assistance following Cyclone Nargis. The United Nations and ASEAN were able to rise to the challenge with a joint response to the Government of Myanmar that led to the formation of a unique tripartite partnership and to a politically acceptable solution for expediting the flow of aid to people in desperate need and moving on quickly to begin reconstruction.

II. REGIONAL COOPERATION IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

A. Outcomes of the Third Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

44. The Asian ministerial conferences on disaster risk reduction represent a high-level forum for Governments to reaffirm their commitment to the Hyogo Framework for Action and exchange practical ways to implement effective disaster risk reduction at the national and local levels and move towards sustainable development. The First Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, hosted by the Government of China in 1995, adopted the Beijing Action for Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia, which promoted the newly adopted Hyogo Framework for Action for the Asian and Pacific region.

45. The Second Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction was hosted by the Government of India in November 2007. The Conference further reaffirmed the commitment of Governments to the Hyogo Framework for Action, adopted the Delhi Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia 2007 and expanded the Asian Ministerial Conference as the Regional Platform, with the participation of national Governments, regional and subregional organizations, United Nations agencies, financial institutions and other stakeholders, including civil societies and the private sector.

46. The Third Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Kuala Lumpur from 2 to 4 December 2008, was hosted by the Government of Malaysia, with support from UN/ISDR and other organizations. Building on the first and second conferences, the overarching theme of the Third Asian Ministerial Conference was “Multi-stakeholders Partnership for Disaster Risk Reduction From National to Local”, with a focus on public-private partnerships for disaster risk reduction and community-based disaster risk reduction activities.²⁹

²⁹ See www.amcdrrmalaysia.com.my.

47. The Conference revolved around six themes: (a) public-private partnership for disaster risk financing; (b) high technology and scientific applications to disaster risk reduction, including climate change adaptation; (c) community-based disaster risk reduction; (d) mobilizing resources for disaster risk reduction; (e) media involvement in disaster risk reduction; and (f) public awareness and education for disaster risk reduction.

48. In its resolution 64/2 of 30 April 2008 on regional cooperation in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary 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 organization of the biennial Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

49. ESCAP was responsible for organizing the Technical Session on Resource Mobilization for Disaster Risk Reduction of the Third Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. The session provided a forum for sharing national and regional experiences on key opportunities and challenges in resource mobilization for disaster risk reduction. Discussions focused on national budgetary allocations for various parts of the disaster cycle, legislative development and policy options, and regional and South-South cooperation, as well as bilateral and multilateral financing. The session developed concrete recommendations to inform debate at the High-level Round Table on the same topic, which also took place at the Conference, during which participants debated policy options for scaling up investment in disaster risk reduction at the regional, national and local levels and regional cooperation mechanisms that would contribute to increasing investment in disaster risk reduction through a multi-hazard approach.

50. Some of the recommendations from the High-level Round Table on Resource Mobilization for Disaster Risk Reduction were reflected in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia 2008.³⁰

(a) Encouraging development of legal and institutional arrangements, including innovative financial mechanisms;

(b) Integrating disaster risk reduction into national, subnational and sectoral development planning;

(c) Encouraging the setting of voluntary targets for resource allocation, including by the private sector;

(d) Building capacities to evaluate financial and economic costs and benefits of disaster risk reduction to promote greater investments in reducing disasters in the region;

(e) Promoting comprehensive preparedness planning to mitigate the impacts of disasters;

(f) Promoting resource-sharing arrangements in the region;

(g) Calling on the international donor community to increase its funding support for regional and national activities for disaster risk reduction and the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action;

³⁰ www.amcdrmalaysia.com.my/docs/KLDeclaratinDraft10112008.pdf.

(h) Apportioning 10 per cent of humanitarian assistance funding for disaster risk reduction by 2010.

51. The Kuala Lumpur Declaration called on regional intergovernmental bodies and regional institutions to consider contributing, through their existing forums, to the follow-up on the declarations issuing from the Asian ministerial conferences and the preparation of future Asian ministerial conferences. The following sections discuss potential activities to follow up on the Kuala Lumpur Declaration at the regional level that could be undertaken by ESCAP within its mandate.

B. Regional network of networks on knowledge sharing and analysis

52. The Third Asian Ministerial Conference, in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, recommended that existing regional knowledge-sharing mechanisms and networks on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation should develop partnerships with other information-sharing and analysis mechanisms.

53. The impact of disasters can be substantially reduced if people at all levels—from government officials to individuals at the community level—are informed of the risks and know how to behave in case of emergency and early warning reception. A national and regional culture of disaster prevention and resilience can be attained through human and institutional capacity-building in disaster risk reduction. The sharing of information, indigenous knowledge, research results, best practices and lessons learned on hazards and vulnerabilities is the key to improving capacities.

54. At its first session, held in Bangkok from 19 to 21 November 2008, the Committee on Information and Communications Technology expressed interest in the enhanced use of ICT application for disaster risk reduction and asked ESCAP to strengthen regional cooperation and collaboration in the sharing of information and resources to improve disaster preparedness and response (see E/ESCAP/CICT/6, paras. 10 and 13). The United Nations Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Environment and Disaster Management recommended in its position paper a regional network of networks for knowledge- and information-sharing.³¹

55. ESCAP subprogramme 5, Information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction, is promoting regional mechanisms for the provision of critical information for disaster management, as well as strengthening country capacities for managing disaster processes. A regional network of networks on knowledge- and information-sharing and analysis, facilitated by ESCAP, with the participation of international and regional partners, could increase the access of member States to lessons learned, knowledge and analysis. E/ESCAP/CDR/3 describes the proposed network of networks in detail.

C. Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation

56. The Ministerial Conference recommended enhancing scientifically informed national policies for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. The widespread awareness and acceptance of the fact that there has been an increase in natural hazards due to climate change has resulted in the need to scale up commitments and promote innovative approaches to reduce disaster risk and climate change in agreement with the goals of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

³¹ Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Environment and Disaster Management, “Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction in ASEAN—Challenges and opportunities for partnership with the UN”, position paper (November 2008).

57. The Bali Action Plan,³² adopted at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in December 2007, recommended enhancing action on adaptation, including, inter alia, consideration of risk management, risk reduction and disaster reduction strategies. It recommended international cooperation to support the urgent implementation of adaptation actions, including through vulnerability assessments; the prioritization of actions; financial needs assessments; capacity-building and response strategies; the integration of adaptation actions into national planning; and the consideration of the urgent and immediate needs of developing countries and countries with special needs. These actions are quite similar to what is needed for effective disaster risk reduction and the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

58. Many of the general principles and requirements for adaptation in the Bali Action Plan are relevant to reducing disaster risk, particularly vulnerability assessments, capacity-building and response strategies, and the integration of actions into sectoral and national planning. The United Nations Climate Change Conference in Poznań in December 2008 also discussed the issues of disaster management, risk assessment and insurance, which are essential to helping developing countries to cope with the inevitable effects of climate change. The need to systematically integrate disaster risk reduction and adaptation into national development strategies has also emerged as a key conclusion from a number of recent international policy forums.³³

59. In support of the Bali Action Plan, and based on consultations with ISDR system partners and Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UN/ISDR has already identified and promoted three areas of action over 2008, i.e. the development of national coordination mechanisms to link disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, the development of a baseline assessment on the status of disaster risk reduction and adaptation efforts, and the preparation of adaptation plans drawing on the Hyogo Framework for Action.³⁴

60. In line with the recommendations of the Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Environment and Disaster Management,³⁵ regional and national coordination mechanisms to link disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation should be developed, capacity-building and funding for disaster preparedness and climate change risks should be ensured, and a regional network of networks for knowledge-sharing and analysis that could be facilitated by ESCAP to support such efforts should be created.

D. Preparedness and early warning

61. The Third Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction also encouraged cost-effective and widely accessible technologies in support of early warning at the national, local and community levels; multi-hazard risk assessment and disaster risk reduction efforts; and the promotion of comprehensive preparedness planning to mitigate the impacts of disasters.

³² FCCC/CP/2007/6/Add.1, decision 1/CP.13.

³³ In particular, the “Stockholm Plan of Action for Integrating Disaster Risks and Climate Change Impacts in Poverty Reduction” and the February 2008 Oslo Policy Forum, “Changing the Way We Develop: Dealing with Disasters and Climate Change” reiterated this view.

³⁴ ISDR, “Sub-paragraph 1(c)(ii, iii) of the Bali Action Plan: Background and Options for Reducing Disaster Risks”, Background note for consultation, Informal paper prepared to support bilateral dialogue on the margins of the UNFCCC meetings, Bangkok, 31 March-4 April 2008.

³⁵ Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Environment and Disaster Management, “Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction in ASEAN—Challenges and opportunities for partnership with the UN”, position paper (November 2008).

62. An effective regional multi-hazard early warning system will require a clear delineation of responsibilities among the different entities in participating countries in order to maximize synergies, along with extensive partnerships with organizations in the United Nations system and other key stakeholders, such as regional organizations, civil society and the private sector. It will also require strong coordination mechanisms at all levels, taking into consideration the work of bodies such as the ESCAP/WMO Typhoon Committee, the WMO/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and various national Governments.

63. Among other disaster preparedness measures, improved early warning systems could reduce the risks posed by disasters. Cooperation to ensure risk knowledge, hazard monitoring and warning services requires collective action among participating countries and regional and international organizations, while dissemination, communication and response activities require capacity-building for governments and local communities. Building the last mile of early warning systems at the community level is crucial for successful early warnings. The report entitled “Early Warning and Preparedness at the Community Level” (E/ESCAP/CDR/4) presents a case for the Pacific island countries and highlights their particular needs.

64. The Committee on Information and Communications Technology at its first session recommended that the secretariat further its initiatives in capacity-building for ICT applications and continue to support regional cooperation to build the capacities of member countries in the use of ICT for disaster risk reduction (see E/ESCAP/CICT/6, paras. 4 and 14). The ESCAP subprogramme on information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction will promote regional and subregional disaster and emergency communication systems for disaster management and emergency response, as well as promoting early warning and strengthening capacities for the provision of critical information at the community level.

E. Regional cooperative mechanisms and resource-sharing arrangements

65. The Ministerial Conference, in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, also promoted resource-sharing arrangements in the region. Although some progress has been made in disaster risk reduction and the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, gaps remain between the technical, human, institutional and financial resources needed and what is currently available for risk reduction, in particular in least developed countries and landlocked and island nations.

66. As many smaller economies cannot afford to have their own full-fledged disaster management systems, there is a need to explore approaches to finding an affordable way to share infrastructure and information resources at the regional or subregional level. To respond efficiently to natural disasters that span international borders, international cooperation has become an indispensable means of providing affordable access to information and products for effective disaster management. The Committee on Information and Communications Technology at its first session recommended that the secretariat promote the sharing of information, communications and space infrastructure and resources to improve disaster preparedness and response (see E/ESCAP/CICT/6, para. 10).

67. Building on particular staff expertise and the need to complement strategies of implementation of Priority for Action Three of the Hyogo Framework for Action to use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels, ESCAP could also further focus on employing information and communications technology for disaster risk reduction. There is an evident gap in this

area and the opportunity exists to collaborate with regional and subregional organizations in constructing information portals and centres of knowledge using ICT and space technology.

F. Socio-economic assessment of disaster impacts

68. The Asian Ministerial Conference also recommended building capacities to evaluate the financial and economic costs and benefits of disaster risk reduction to promote greater investments in reducing disasters in the region.

69. ESCAP will also build capacities in the use of the damage and loss assessment methodology in coordination with relevant regional organizations and in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery established by the World Bank. The damage and loss assessment methodology is based on the utilization of data from the national accounts of the affected country as a means of evaluating the damage and the losses caused by the disaster. In the simplest terms, this methodology provides for the estimation of the destruction of assets brought about by the natural event that caused the disaster, the changes in the flows of the economy caused by the temporary absence of the destroyed assets, and the modifications in the performance of the affected economy.

G. Partnerships and South-South cooperation

70. In early 2009, the Secretaries-General of ASEAN and the United Nations will gather at the third ASEAN-United Nations Summit to strengthen cooperation among their organizations in a range of areas, including disaster management. The third ASEAN-United Nations Summit presents an opportunity not only to reflect on the road traversed thus far, but also to inject new energy into the partnership. The nature of the challenges faced by nations, aid agencies and individuals during disasters often calls for international solidarity and cooperation and, as was demonstrated during the internationally coordinated relief and recovery effort in the response to Cyclone Nargis in May 2008 in Myanmar, credible regional and international organizations such as ASEAN and the United Nations can play a fundamental role.

71. The ASEAN secretariat, the United Nations and the World Bank are also in discussions on joining hands through an upcoming ASEAN secretariat-United Nations-World Bank declaration for disaster risk management to enhance cooperation and coordination in the areas of planning, capacity-building, information and knowledge management, and best practices in disaster risk management.

72. ESCAP promotes regional South-South cooperation mechanisms for sharing resources in disaster management, for the analysis and sharing of good practices and for the identification and assessment of disaster risk reduction activities to support the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in the region. The work of ESCAP in promoting capacity-building through South-South cooperation is a pillar in ensuring sustainable socio-economic development among developing countries, particularly the least developed countries.

H. Regional report to the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

73. The Third Asian Ministerial Conference invited the regional office for Asia and the Pacific of UN/ISDR and members of IAP to carry the messages in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration to the second session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, which is scheduled to be held in Geneva from 16 to 19 June 2009, and beyond.

74. The Global Platform, as a successor to the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction, is expected to become the main global forum for all parties involved in disaster risk reduction, namely Governments, United Nations agencies, international financial institutions, regional bodies, civil society, the private sector, and the scientific and academic communities. The first session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction was held in Geneva in June 2007. The meeting represented the primary multi-stakeholder forum for all parties involved in disaster risk reduction and aimed to raise awareness of the topic, to share experience and to guide the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction system.

75. UN/ISDR is coordinating the preparation of a 2009 global assessment report on disaster risk reduction, which is to be launched at the second session of the Global Platform. Countries are undertaking the Hyogo Framework for Action review process in preparation for the reports to the second session, using the Hyogo Framework for Action Monitor, an online reporting tool.

76. In preparation for the Global Platform in June 2009, the UN/ISDR regional office for Asia and the Pacific is in the process of updating the *Interim Regional Synthesis Report on HFA Implementation in Asia and the Pacific*³⁶ as more national, regional and thematic progress reports are available.

77. A review of the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action by UN/ISDR³⁷ notes that subregional organizations constructed and coordinated agreements on transnational and regional cross-border risks yet, the study concludes that transboundary risk reduction practices are still in their infancy, as solid local and regional risk reduction capacities have yet to emerge in most countries. A lack of resourcing and capacity in some organizations limits their ability to either lead or participate in regional forums. In some cases, stakeholders lack knowledge about global and regional policy reforms and, generally, stakeholders have an insufficient understanding of the priorities and programmes of other stakeholders in the region, which in turn leads to a limited alignment of their work programmes.

78. In this context, there is a clear need for enhanced coordination and cooperation at the regional level to minimize duplication and to further the effective use of limited human, information and financial resources. Under its mandate and as chair of the United Nations Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism, ESCAP has a role to play in coordinating and strengthening regional disaster risk management and risk reduction activities and strategies.

79. The Regional Coordination Mechanism was established by the Economic and Social Council to improve coordination among the work programmes of the organizations in the United Nations system and to move towards regional-level system-wide coherence and delivering as one. The Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism, chaired by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, has 35 members, of which 27 have Bangkok-based regional offices.

80. There is a need for a common regional approach to disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific. The Regional Coordination Mechanism can enhance system-wide coherence at the regional level. ESCAP—in coordination with UN/ISDR, OCHA, UNDP and other key members of the sub-group on disaster management—could facilitate the development of a position paper by the Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Environment and Disaster Management that would address regional aspects of disaster risk reduction and the regional

³⁶ See note 19.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 8.

implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action for future sessions of the Global Platform.

I. Next Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

81. The Third Asian Ministerial Conference welcomed the offer of the Government of the Republic of Korea to host the Fourth Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Incheon in 2010. It also called on regional intergovernmental bodies and regional institutions to consider contributing, through their existing forums, to the follow-up of the Asian ministerial declarations and the preparation of future Asian ministerial conferences.

82. In its resolution 64/2, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to work closely with UN/ISDR in the organization of the biennial Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (para. 4(b)).

83. ESCAP, the Asia-Pacific arm of the United Nations, with 62 members and associate members, is the only comprehensive intergovernmental forum in the region dedicated to economic, social and environmental issues. With its mandate and convening power, ESCAP could serve as the formal regional forum for discussions and the building of consensus and policymaking on disaster risk reduction.

84. The ESCAP secretariat could organize the formal intergovernmental consultative process leading to the next Ministerial Conference, in coordination with UN/ISDR and in close consultation with the ESCAP Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission, through the sessions of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction and the Commission. The ISDR Asian Partnership on Disaster Reduction would continue to provide its technical support to the Ministerial Conference as an informal multi-stakeholder forum.

III. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE COMMITTEE

85. The Committee may wish to consider, in coordination with UN/ISDR and other key members of the Regional Coordination Mechanism, how ESCAP should contribute to the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction at its session to be held in Geneva in June 2009 and beyond.

86. The Committee may also wish to consider the involvement of ESCAP in the preparations for the Fourth Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and make recommendations to the Commission.

87. The Committee may further wish to review the issues covered in the present document and advise the secretariat on priority areas of work to support regional cooperation in the following areas:

(a) Promoting and developing a regional network of networks on knowledge sharing and analysis with the participation of relevant regional and subregional organizations and facilitated by ESCAP;

(b) Strengthening policies and informed decision-making on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation;

(c) Promoting comprehensive preparedness planning to mitigate the impacts of disasters and the development of cost-effective and accessible

technologies to support early warning at the national to community levels using a multi-hazard approach;

(d) Promoting regional cooperative mechanisms and regional resource-sharing arrangements for disaster risk reduction, including on information, communications and space technologies, to improve disaster preparedness and response in the region;

(e) Building capacities to assess the socio-economic impacts of disasters and to evaluate the financial and economic costs and benefits of disaster risk reduction for more effective resource mobilization;

(f) Enhancing partnerships and collaboration between the United Nations and regional organizations, such as ASEAN, in the area of disaster risk management and risk reduction. Areas of collaboration may include capacity-building and technical assistance;

(g) Strengthening regional South-South cooperation mechanisms for implementing the above-mentioned regional activities on disaster risk management and risk reduction.

88. The Committee may wish to provide guidance to the secretariat on activities that it could undertake to address the issues that are of common concern to members and associate members. It may also wish to provide guidance to the secretariat on its future strategic direction in disaster risk reduction, including possible outputs that could be reflected in the programme of work for the biennium 2010-2011.