



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Sixty-fifth session  
23-29 April 2009  
Bangkok

**REVIEW OF ISSUES PERTINENT TO THE SUBSIDIARY STRUCTURE OF  
THE COMMISSION: DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

(Item 2 (f) of the provisional agenda)

**SUMMARY OF PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF  
COMMISSION RESOLUTION 64/2 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**

*Note by the secretariat*

**SUMMARY**

The present document summarizes the progress made on the implementation of resolution 64/2 adopted by the Commission at its sixty-fourth session.

Major activities carried out by the secretariat include the establishment of the Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division to service the newly established Committee on Information and Communications Technology and the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction. In addition, the secretariat engaged in various regional cooperation initiatives, such as the establishment of a regional South-South cooperation mechanism for disaster risk reduction, and the administration of the Multi-donor Voluntary Trust Fund on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangements in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia. The secretariat was involved in events following Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and the Wenchuan earthquake in China, and organized sessions during the third Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, and signed a memorandum of understanding with the Japanese space agency. The secretariat also organized the first session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, the first session of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction, and a high-level round table, all of which emphasized the importance of regional cooperation for disaster management.

The Commission may wish to review the progress achieved and to provide the secretariat with comments and further guidance for the effective implementation of this resolution.

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## I. PROGRESS REPORT

1. Pursuant to resolution 64/1 of 30 April 2008, in which the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to reorganize the secretariat so as to enhance its capability to service the subsidiary structure of the Commission, and resolution 64/2 of 30 April 2008, in which it requested the Executive Secretary to strengthen the role and capacity of ESCAP in the area of disaster risk reduction, the Executive Secretary established the Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division, which is responsible for servicing the Committee on Information and Communications Technology and the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction, both newly established under resolution 64/1.

2. The present document reports on activities to implement resolutions 64/1 and 64/2, undertaken by various divisions within the secretariat, including the Environment and Development Division, the Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division, the Programme Management Division, the Statistics Division, and the Office of the Executive Secretary, in cooperation with other United Nations agencies and programmes.

3. In response to Commission resolution 64/2, which urged countries of the Asia-Pacific region and international and regional organizations to implement the Delhi Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia, adopted at the second Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia on 7 and 8 November 2007, the secretariat continues to strengthen partnerships with various regional organizations and institutions on disaster risk reduction. These organizations include the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), the Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC), the Panel on Tropical Cyclones, and the Typhoon Committee. The secretariat, also pursuant to resolution 64/2, continues to support early warning systems and disaster preparedness in the region, including the multi-hazard early warning system in Sri Lanka and other countries of the Panel on Tropical Cyclones and Typhoon Committee.

4. The Commission also requested the Executive Secretary to take effective measures to facilitate, in cooperation with relevant United Nations entities, the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action<sup>1</sup> in the region and the recommendations of the first and second Asian ministerial conferences on disaster risk reduction, within the framework of the programme of work of ESCAP.

5. To this end, the secretariat assisted the Typhoon Committee in updating strategic plans for more effective integration of the goals of the Hyogo Framework for Action into the framework of cooperation among Typhoon Committee countries, especially in updating annual operating plans to achieve socio-economic goals.

6. The secretariat also assisted the Typhoon Committee in organizing a regional workshop on coping with climate change in the Typhoon Committee area. The workshop focused on strategies to integrate risk reduction associated with current and future climate variability into national development plans, as well as ensuring the inclusion of geological hazard management, including for earthquakes and landslides, in disaster risk reduction programmes.

7. The Concluding Regional Workshop on Sharing Experience and Expertise on Building Community Resilience to Natural Disasters through Partnership, held in Bangkok from 21 to 23 April 2008, promoted multi-hazard early warning systems

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

and strategies to build community resilience to natural disasters. A publication with the same title was issued and widely disseminated throughout the region.<sup>2</sup>

8. Paragraph 31, subparagraph (e) of the Hyogo Framework for Action calls on regional organizations to “Support the development of regional mechanisms and capacities for early warning to disasters, including for tsunami.”

9. Accordingly, the ESCAP secretariat continues to actively promote South-South cooperation as an effective modality for enhancing cooperation in disaster risk reduction (DRR) among the countries of the region. With support from the ESCAP secretariat and the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a regional South-South cooperation mechanism for DRR was established in late 2007, for which Indonesia serves as the interim secretariat. The ESCAP secretariat and UNDP provided the interim secretariat with technical assistance in developing its first regional initiative to promote knowledge and good practices in linking DRR with climate change adaptation. In October 2008, 12 Asia-Pacific countries were brought together to share national experiences in developing legislation, policies and programmes related to DRR and climate change adaptation. The participating countries agreed on an action plan to support the regional South-South cooperation mechanism for DRR, including the development of project proposals for submission to the South-South Cooperation Programme under the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery.

10. In line with Commission resolution 62/7 and other mandates, the ESCAP secretariat is administering the Multi-donor Voluntary Trust Fund on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangements in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia. The Fund has received contributions from the Governments of Thailand (\$10 million), Sweden (\$2.6 million), Turkey and Nepal.

11. The Fund aims to build and enhance tsunami early warning capabilities in accordance with the needs of Indian Ocean and South-East Asian countries. As a resource mechanism to narrow the capacity gaps in the region, the Fund builds institutional, technical, system-wide and other types of capacity for the development of multi-hazard early warning systems.

12. The role of ESCAP in managing the Fund is to promote the development of effective early warning systems through regional cooperative arrangements, to develop partnerships and promote coherence among different early warning stakeholders, and to administer the funds efficiently and transparently.

13. The Fund works within the international framework of the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System Programme, coordinated by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (IOC-UNESCO). In addition to IOC-UNESCO, four other United Nations entities are partners in the Fund: the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UNDP and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). These partners contribute to the technical appraisal of projects, attend the Fund’s Advisory Council meetings as observers, and participate in the development of a mapping study on gaps and unmet needs in regional tsunami early warning systems, which guides Fund programming.

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<sup>2</sup> ESCAP, *Building Community Resilience to Natural Disasters through Partnership: Sharing Experience and Expertise in the Region* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.08.II.F.20).

14. As of the end of 2008, the Fund had programmed roughly \$9.2 million for projects balancing different aspects of early warning arrangements, including monitoring and warning services, risk knowledge, dissemination and communications, and response capacity from the national to the subnational and community levels.

15. Further information on the Fund is available at <[http://www.unescap.org/pmd/tsunami\\_index.asp](http://www.unescap.org/pmd/tsunami_index.asp)> (see also E/ESCAP/CDR/INF/6).

16. The secretariat has been promoting regional cooperation so that member States can have easy access to and effective use of space-based information and technical tools for disaster management. In 2008, the secretariat provided fellowships for government officers from developing countries to attend a training course on geoinformation for natural hazard management and disaster risk reduction in Indonesia; and a course on the application of space technology for disaster management support emphasized drought monitoring, desertification and crop yield prediction in India. Both training activities were aimed at providing theoretical and practical knowledge on the application of remote sensing and geographic information system technologies to disaster reduction.

17. In its role as the United Nations system's regional liaison, the secretariat supported the Secretary-General's efforts in the aftermath of the devastating Cyclone Nargis which struck Myanmar in May 2008. The Executive Secretary of ESCAP played an important role as a member of the Advisory Group to the Tripartite Core Group, which was the main mechanism for cooperation between the international community and Myanmar in coordinating the relief efforts for Cyclone Nargis survivors. Various missions of the Executive Secretary to Myanmar strengthened the efforts of the United Nations Country Team and enhanced trust between the United Nations, ESCAP in particular, and the Government of Myanmar.

18. The secretariat also provided technical assistance for the preparation of the Post Nargis Joint Assessment, which 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 long-term recovery. This report has served as a reference when appealing to the international community for monetary and in kind assistance, and as a baseline for monitoring the progress of the recovery.

19. In October 2008, the Regional High-level Expert Group Meeting on Post-Nargis recovery and Livelihood Opportunities in Myanmar was organized by ESCAP and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), with the support of the Government of Myanmar. The meeting provided a regional-level platform to develop a consensus on priorities and strategies for effectively assessing damage after disasters, moving from relief efforts to medium- and long-term economic and social recovery as well as disaster risk reduction.

20. The secretariat, in coordination with the Tripartite Core Group, continues to provide support for the completion of the Post-Nargis Recovery and Preparedness Plan, which aims to identify longer-term strategies and activities required to ensure that the survivors of Cyclone Nargis can return to their pre-Nargis lives, and have the opportunity to improve their standards of living.

21. In September 2008, the Executive Secretary visited the region affected by the Sichuan earthquake in China, where she outlined an ESCAP disaster risk reduction strategy system highlighting regional cooperation in areas including disaster risk reduction and preparedness, socio-economic impact assessment of disasters, and

enhancing regional South-South cooperation mechanisms for sharing experiences in disaster management.

22. The “disaster risk reduction and preparedness” area of work includes creating regional access to information about disaster risk reduction as well as access to policy and budget mechanisms to ensure adequate support and early warning systems. The “socio-economic impact assessment of disasters” area includes developing and sharing model policies and legislation aimed at reducing the social and economic impact of disasters. The enhancing regional South-South cooperation mechanisms for sharing experiences in disaster management area includes using and enhancing South-South cooperation mechanisms already in place for analysis and sharing of good practices, and identifying and assessing disaster risk reduction activities in the region.

23. In order to promote regional cooperation and create awareness among member States regarding the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, the secretariat submitted a document to the Committee on Information and Communications Technology at its first session under the agenda item entitled “Information and communications technology-enabled disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific” (E/ESCAP/CICT/2). This document describes trends related to the development and application of ICT in this area, and identifies areas for regional cooperation, including: (a) the development and sharing of information, communications and space infrastructure and resources; (b) emergency communications systems; (c) multi-hazard information networks; and (d) capacity-building in the use of ICT for disaster management.

24. Also in November 2008, in preparation for the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, the secretariat organized the Expert Group Meeting on WSIS + 5 and Emerging Issues in Asia and the Pacific, including the session ICT for disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific. This session examined the effectiveness and efficiency of disaster risk reduction efforts and strengthened cooperation between the ICT and disaster management communities. The meeting also studied the decisions made at the second Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in the area of disaster risk reduction.

25. In its resolution 64/2, the Commission requested that the Executive Secretary take steps to work closely with the secretariat of ISDR, 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.

26. To this end, in December 2008, the secretariat led the preparation and organization of two meetings under the theme resource mobilization for disaster risk reduction at the Third Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. This theme was addressed through a technical session and a high-level round table. The technical session shared 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.

27. The Technical Session also developed concrete recommendations to inform debate at the high-level round table on the resource mobilization for disaster risk reduction theme. The high-level round table debated policy options for scaling up investment in disaster risk reduction at the regional, national and local levels, and

regional cooperation mechanisms that increase investment in disaster risk reduction through a multi-hazard approach.

28. In December 2008, the secretariat signed a memorandum of understanding with the Japanese space agency to develop a regional cooperative mechanism aimed at enabling Asia-Pacific countries to effectively access and use satellite remote sensing information and satellite communications in order to support more effective disaster management in the region, through the Sentinel Asia initiative founded by the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum in 2005. Under the memorandum of understanding, two joint activities, one in the Kingdom of Tonga for countries in the Pacific, and another in Kyrgyzstan for countries of the Central Asian subregion, will be organized in early 2009. The joint activities aim to enable national disaster management authorities to develop the necessary national institutional arrangements and to acquire the information technology knowledge required for them to benefit from Sentinel Asia and other relevant initiatives.

29. In 2009, a high-level round table on regional cooperation for disaster risk reduction, including senior leaders in disaster risk reduction from seven Asian countries will take place as part of the first session of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction. The purpose of the round table is to discuss the current status of disaster reduction efforts and provide recommendations for improvement through regional cooperation. The outcome of the high-level round table will provide guidance to the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction.

30. It is hoped that the first session of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction, which will be held in March 2009, will display the commitment of member States to working side by side to increase their resilience to natural disasters. Building on the experience of ESCAP, and the work accomplished by a variety of organizations with years of experience in coordinating efforts to reduce the impact of disasters in the region, the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction constitutes the first regional legislative body dedicated to building the resilience of the nations and communities in the Asia-Pacific region, in support of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

31. The Asia-Pacific region, impacted by the highest number of natural disasters and experiencing the highest number of losses and casualties due to disasters worldwide, is facing an enormous and unavoidable challenge which, aggravated by the trends in global climate change, may cause immeasurable harm to the people of the region.

32. In order to collectively strengthen the capacity to tackle this challenging issue, member States may choose to coordinate their efforts through the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction and to empower the secretariat, in its coordinating role, to implement and monitor the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in Asia and the Pacific and the outcomes of the Asian ministerial conferences on disaster risk reduction. Member States may also choose to strengthen the secretariat's contributions to: enhancing regional cooperation on disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific; promoting early warning and preparedness at the community level; advising and providing policy guidance in the use of information, communications and space technologies for disaster risk reduction; and overseeing the activities of ESCAP cooperative mechanisms on disaster risk reduction, such as the Typhoon Committee and the Panel on Tropical Cyclones.

## **II. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

33. Some of the above progress is being reported by the secretariat to the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction at its first session and major issues and the

outcome of the deliberations will be reflected in the report of the Committee (see E/ESCAP/65/9). In the current and next biennium, the secretariat will continue to follow up on and implement the recommendations of the Committee, pending approval by the Commission as well as the resolutions of the Commission within the overall framework of the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

34. The Commission may wish to review the progress achieved and provide the secretariat with comments and further guidance for more effective implementation of its resolution 64/2.

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