



Ministry of Home Affairs
Government of India

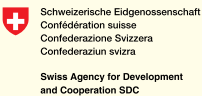


2ND ASIAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

NEW DELHI, INDIA
7th-8th NOVEMBER, 2007

BACKGROUND NOTE

CONFERENCE PARTNERS



background

Asia is the largest and most populous continent of the world. It covers 29.4% of the earth's total land area, more than 60% of the world human population and contributes 40% of its wealth. The continent has a large number of countries characterized by a wide range of geographical, geological and climatic features, which cause various types of natural hazards at regular intervals. Many of these hazards turn into disasters causing enormous loss of life and property and unaccountable sufferings of people, particularly the poor and other vulnerable sections of society. Rapid growth of population, unplanned settlements, unsafe building practices and erratic climatic conditions caused by environmental imbalances have compounded the frequency and magnitude of natural disasters in Asia.

Almost all the natural disasters of the world which claimed more than hundred thousand lives each – the Tangshan earthquake of China in 1976 (255,000 deaths), Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004 (283,000 deaths), Bangladesh cyclone and floods of 1970 and 1991 (300,000 and 183,000 deaths), to name a few, occurred in Asia. Disasters causing deaths of a thousand and above would make a long list covering almost all the regions of the continent.

All these disasters have wiped out in a matter of few minutes the gains of development made over decades. Various studies have indicated that countries of the region lose between 2% to 20% of their GDP and 10% to 30% of their revenue every year on account of natural disasters. Besides a sizeable portion of their resources are diverted for disaster relief and rehabilitation. Natural disasters have been identified as one of the major factors that perpetuate the condition of poverty in many parts of Asia.

context

For a long time, public policy on disaster in Asia was marked by a sense of helplessness that disasters are caused by the vagaries and wrath of nature and there was very little that could be done except to rescue the affected people and provide them relief and rehabilitation assistance. Development of scientific and technological knowledge have enhanced understanding of natural hazards and practices of safe standards of settlements and living at many places have demonstrated that it is possible to prevent and mitigate disasters with various measures. While developed countries like Japan, South Korea, Singapore etc have mitigated disasters by a combination of structural and non-structural measures often with a heavy investment, many low income countries like Bangladesh, Philippines etc have significantly reduced the risks of disasters by mobilizing communities and making them aware of the simple steps of preparedness that can save lives during disasters. Indigenous coping mechanisms of many ancient civilizations have also helped to mitigate disasters.

Asia has always taken a leading role in the global movement for disaster risk reduction. The Asian city of Yokohama hosted the first World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 1994 which adopted the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation and its Plan of Action, providing landmark guidance on reducing disaster risk and the impacts of disasters. A decade later, in 2005, another Asian city of Kobe hosted the second World Conference which adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters.

The Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA) has advanced the cause of mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into socio-economic development planning and activities by adopting Five Priorities for Action through five-fold processes:

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- a) **Political process to ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and a local priority**, which would require countries to develop policies and legislative and institutional frameworks for disaster risk reduction and commit resources for prevention, mitigation and preparedness for disasters;
- b) **Technical process for identification, assessment and monitoring of disaster risks**, which would require application of science and technology for risk identification, risk mapping, risk assessment and risk monitoring and enhancing early warning of disasters;
- c) **Socio-educational process of knowledge, education and innovation** for increasing citizens' understanding and skills to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels;
- d) **Development process of reducing underlying risks** through poverty alleviation and urban, environmental and regional land use planning so as to mainstream disaster risk reduction in all relevant sectors of development planning and programmes as well as in post-disaster recovery; and
- e) **Humanitarian process** of factoring disaster risk reduction in disaster preparedness, response and recovery.

There is now a clear understanding that all these processes are crucial for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (2000) and the Sustainable Development Plan (2001) of the United Nations.

As a follow-up on the Hyogo Framework of Action, a number of initiatives are under way at national, regional and international levels. The UN International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction has developed Strategic Directions for the ISDR System to Assist

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the Implementation of the Hyogo Framework. A comprehensive Guide for Implementing the Hyogo Framework of Action has been developed to assist the Government authorities and other organizations in implementing the HFA. Further Guide Note on Indicators for Assessing Progress on Disaster Risk Reduction has been developed.

In a major move to strengthen the consultative process of disaster risk reduction at the international level, a multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder Global Platform on disaster risk reduction has been developed, bringing together a wide range of actors in the various sectors of development and humanitarian work and in the environmental and scientific fields related to disaster risk reduction. It aims at expanding the political space dedicated by governments to disaster risk reduction, in all sectors, and contributes to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals particularly in respect of poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. The first meeting of the Platform was held on 5th-7th June, 2007 at Geneva.

The World Bank through a partnership with ISDR has launched a major initiative of Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) in September 2006 to support national, regional and global capacities in reducing disaster risk, particularly in low and middle-income countries.

Various regional initiatives have been taken around the world on disaster risk reduction. The Pacific Islands region has developed its Framework for Action 2005-2015 entitled "An Investment for Sustainable Development in Pacific Island Countries". The Africa region has established an Africa Advisory Group on Disaster Risk Reduction and an African Regional Platform of National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction to implement its Africa Regional Strategy for and Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction. The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) adopted the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster

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Management and Emergency Response. Various Government and Non-Government stakeholders of South Asia met in New Delhi in July 2006 and adopted a Delhi Declaration on South Asian regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has finalized a Comprehensive Framework of Disaster Management, which has been adopted at the Delhi Summit in April 2007. Meanwhile a SAARC Disaster Management Centre has been set up in New Delhi.

Earlier in September 2005, the Government of the People's Republic of China hosted the 1st Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction in Beijing to enhance regional understanding and cooperation in the implementation of HFA. This Conference was attended by 42 Asian countries, of which 33 were represented at the ministerial level. This Conference adopted the Beijing Action for Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia and resolved to meet again in 2007 to review the implementation of the HFA. In particular, the Beijing Action encouraged national governments to use and strengthen existing regional cooperation mechanisms like ESCAP, UN:ISDR, SAARC, ASEAN, ADRC and ADPC so as to follow up on the recommendation on the Beijing Action Plan and facilitate the review of the process of implementation of the Hyogo Framework of Action. India offered to host this 2nd Asian Conference in November 2007 in New Delhi.

goals

The overarching goal of the 2nd Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction would be to review the implementation of the Hyogo Priorities of Action in Asia in the context of various initiatives taken by the national, regional and international governments during the past two years and share the experiences of Asian and Pacific countries in Disaster Risk Reduction.

objectives

The objectives of the 2nd Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction would be:

- a) To review the action taken by the national governments and other stakeholders for the implementation of the Hyogo Framework of Action as a follow up to the Beijing Action for Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia;
- b) To take stock of initiatives taken in various sub-regions of Asia for promoting and enhancing cooperation among the nations within and outside the governments for disaster risk reduction;
- c) To share and exchange best practices and lessons learned from disaster risk reduction in various fields including application of science and technology, community based disaster preparedness, public-private partnership etc;
- d) To discuss the outcome of new international initiatives such as Global Platform, Regional Platforms and Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction; and
- e) To develop a vision and roadmap for disaster risk reduction in Asia.

expected outcome

In line with the above objectives, the 2nd Asian Conference is expected to achieve the following results:

- a) Report on the positive gains made in disaster risk reduction in Asia;
- b) Identify the gap areas requiring concerted action by various stakeholders;
- c) Develop common agreement on further enhancing regional cooperation among nations; and
- d) Reach agreement on short and medium-term initiatives for disaster risk reduction in Asia.

structure

The Inaugural and Valedictory Sessions of the Conference would be held in plenary. The remaining sessions would be structured in two segments: (a) Inter-governmental and (b) Technical. The Inter-governmental segment would be attended by Ministers and other representatives of Governments while the Technical segment would be open to the scientists, professionals, NGOs and other invitees.

In order that the meetings of the Inter-governmental Segment generate high degree of interest among the senior policy makers, these would be held in four structured High-level Round Tables, as under:

High-level Round Table 1:	Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction in National Policies and Programmes
High-level Round Table 2:	Enhancing Public-Private-Partnership in Disaster Risk Reduction
High-level Round Table 3:	Integrating Disaster Reduction into Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Activities
High-level Round Table 4:	Promoting Regional Cooperation Mechanisms on Disaster Reduction

All these Round Tables shall be held in plenary in Inter-governmental segment. Countries would be given the option to make presentation in any High-level Round Table where significant policy initiatives or achievements have been made in the recent past. Countries shall be requested to intimate their preference to speak in specific session well in advance and accordingly the session plan shall be prepared. Each session shall have a Chair and a Co-Chair which may be decided on the

structure

eve of the Conference according to the confirmations received regarding participation. Chair of the session shall introduce the theme for discussion and moderate the presentations. In all 8-10 presentations of 7 minutes' duration shall be made in each session to be followed by questions and answers and discussion for half-an-hour. The Co-Chair shall summarize the discussions and suggest follow up steps for meeting the challenges.

Regional Organizations like SAARC, ASEAN, ADRC and ICIMOD may be given slots for presentation at the Round Table 4 on Promotion of Regional Cooperation Mechanisms on Disaster Reduction.

The Technical Sessions would be held in two separate groups, one comprising of scientists and professionals and the other of the practitioners. Each group shall have two sessions on two different but related themes, as under:

Technical Group A: Application of Science and Technology for Disaster Risk Reduction

Theme 1 : Hazard Monitoring, Vulnerability Mapping and Risk Assessment

Theme 2 : Disaster Warning and Communication System

Technical Group B: Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction in Development

Theme 1 : Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction in Poverty Alleviation

Theme 2 : Addressing the Issues of Women and Children in Disaster Risk Reduction

side events

During the Conference Side Events shall be organized on various specialized themes. One such side event shall focus on the Problems of Disaster Risk Reduction in Island Countries particularly with reference to the Pacific and India Ocean Island Countries which are facing the threats of submergence of wide areas due to sea level rise and coastal erosion.

The World Bank has proposed to organize a side event on Risk Financing and Risk Insurance which would provide an interactive forum on the gains made by some countries in risk insurance and the possibilities of risk financing in other countries particularly in the growing economies. USAID has proposed to organize a side event on Preparedness for Professional Disaster Response Management Systems which would provide an interactive forum to discuss the experiences from several Asian Countries. International Recovery Platform (IRP) will organize a side event on Pre-Disaster Recovery Planning for Resilient Development.

In addition to the above, UN: International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, Bangkok and Asian Disaster Reduction Centre, Kobe, Japan, are organizing Pre-Conference events on 6th November, 2007, on 'Regional Cooperation on Disaster Management in Central Asia and ASEAN'; 'Meeting the challenges of Disaster Risk. Reduction in communities and cities : Building on good practices in the Asian region' and 'Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Management' among SAARC countries respectively. Pre-Conference events will be by invitation from the concerned agencies.

exhibition

An exhibition on the products and services of various Government organizations, scientific and technical institutions, UN organizations, national and international NGOs, corporate houses etc on disaster risk reduction shall be organized to showcase the initiatives of the organizations in reducing the risks of disasters. Necessary space shall be provided on demand to participating countries to set up their stalls in the exhibition.

participation

The Conference would be attended by Ministers and other Government and Non-Government representatives from Asia and the Pacific Island Countries. Government representative may consist of a Minister and senior officers concerned with disaster risk reduction in respective country. The countries would be expected to pay for the travel and accommodation of Government representatives.

Experts, DM practitioners, Scientists, Subject matter specialists and Professionals for the Technical Sessions from Government and Non-Government organizations shall be invited by name.

Representatives of the United Nations agencies, regional organizations and other specialized agencies at the international, regional and national levels shall also be invited to attend the Conference.

partnership

United Nations-International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN:ISDR), The World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Economic and Social Council for Asia Pacific (UNESCAP), Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC), Asian Disaster Reduction Centre (ADRC), SAARC Disaster Management Centre, Swiss Development Corporation (SDC), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and SAARC Disaster Management Centre are collaborating with Government of India in organizing the Conference.

website

Various technical, logistic, administrative and other arrangements of the Conference shall be uploaded at the Conference website **<http://www.amcdrindia.com>** for the facility of the participating countries, organizations and individuals.

The proceedings of the Conference will be in English.