

# FOREWORD



In August 2017, devastating floods swept across South Asia and typhoons wreaked havoc in East Asia. These were stark reminders of nature's destructive potential. In Bangladesh, India and Nepal flooding and landslides killed hundreds of people. They destroyed homes, schools, businesses and crops, and exposed millions to hunger and disease. Such events are shocking, but not surprising. As clearly set out in the *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2017*, risk is outpacing resilience. Recent events are the latest in a series of catastrophes in Asia and the Pacific, the most vulnerable region in the world to natural disasters.

Natural disasters can destroy the outcomes of years of work and investment by communities, governments and development organizations. That is why the principle of the disaster resilience is central to the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals. If these Goals are to be achieved, then all new infrastructure should be capable of withstanding extreme natural disasters to enable people to escape and survive. Yet the Sustainable Development Goals have another critical stipulation. They are to be achieved not just for most people, but for everyone. The objective is to 'leave no one behind'. This is particularly relevant in the context of disaster risk reduction. Planning for resilience should be both robust and comprehensive. Early warning systems should reach everyone likely to be affected. Food, water or shelter should be swiftly available, even in the most remote areas.

This edition of the *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report* considers what this means in practice. It looks at the relationship between the impact of disasters, poverty and inequality. Where inequality is concerned, the report highlights that each disaster in the region leads to a 0.13-point increase in the Gini coefficient. It explores how the impacts of disasters intersect with violent conflict. It argues that measures for disaster risk reduction should take account of the shifting risks associated with climate change, especially in risk hotspots where a greater likelihood of change coincides with a higher concentration of poor, vulnerable or marginalized people. Although interventions to reduce disaster risk cannot alone prevent conflict, they should be part of an integrated approach to conflict prevention and peace-building.

The report shows that future natural disasters may have greater destructive potential. The region could account for 40 per cent of global economic losses resulting from disasters in the years to come, with small island developing States and least developed countries experiencing annual GDP losses equivalent to 4 per cent and 2.5 per cent, respectively. It also highlights the scientific and technical advances in forecasting that can identify new risks and vulnerabilities, and help anticipate extreme events. I hope this report will help policy makers, in both public and private sectors, understand disaster risk and resilience better, so that decisive action can be taken across Asia and the Pacific.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Shamshad Akhtar". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Shamshad Akhtar  
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Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic and  
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