

Foreword



Millions of people around the Asia-Pacific region remain exposed to a higher frequency and intensity of natural hazards, from locust swarms and earthquakes to cyclones and other exceptional events. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated how, in an increasingly globalized world, such hazards can threaten a systemic global collapse, creating risks that often interconnect, with one triggering another in a cascade of devastating events. The unrelenting pressure of climate change, coupled with the pandemic-induced socioeconomic crisis, has further transformed the whole “riskscape,” from the steppes of Central Asia to the small island developing States of the Pacific.

This edition of the *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2021* comes at an opportune time within a broader and more perilous disaster riskscape in the region. The *Report* argues that all these hazards need to be considered in relation to the larger systems that they are likely to disrupt. The increasing likelihood of extreme weather events is degrading ecosystems and habitats and increasing further the possibility of another pandemic by altering relationships in our ecosystem. Policymakers must consider more complex and varied future scenarios by leveraging technological advances and innovative approaches.

As the region prepares to recover better together, the *Report* suggests policy pathways on how to manage disasters, prepare and issue timely warnings for them, and offer support and shelter, especially to safeguard our most vulnerable people and groups. The principles of political commitment and collaboration are key drivers for managing disaster risks in a more coherent and systematic way at the regional and subregional levels.

I hope that the *Report* will contribute to a deeper understanding of what has been achieved so far, and illuminate the possibilities for building disaster, climate and health resilience to better protect people and planet, now and in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. S. Alisjahbana'.

Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana

Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP