

CONCEPT NOTE

Building Resilience to Drought in South-East Asia: A High-Level National Multi-Stakeholder Policy Dialogue in Cambodia

**Organized by the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM)
in partnership with UNESCAP and ASEAN Secretariat**

**Raffles Hotel Le Royal, Phnom Penh
5th February 2020**

Introduction:

The *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2019* shows that annualized economic losses in Asia and the Pacific more than quadruple when slow-onset disasters, most notably drought, are added to the region's disaster risk landscape ('riskycape'). The average annual loss (AAL) for the region is \$675 billion, of which \$405 billion or 60 percent, is drought-related agricultural losses. The key takeaway is that economic losses due to disasters are larger than previously estimated with most of this additional loss linked to the impacts of slow-onset disasters in the agricultural sector.

In South-East Asia, the average annual loss (AAL) is \$86.5 billion with drought losses accounting for 60 per cent of the total. The AAL is highest in Cambodia, Myanmar, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Vietnam (CMLV), and the Philippines. In Cambodia, the AAL as percentage of Gross Domestic Product is at 8 percent of which nearly 5.5 percent is contributed by losses due to agricultural drought.¹ The dominance of agricultural drought-related losses is consistent across all countries in South-East Asia. Thus, no South-East Asian country can afford to ignore agricultural drought when mitigating the economic impacts of disasters. Furthermore, agricultural drought does not only result in large economic losses; it is also linked with low levels of socio-economic development.

These findings reinforce the key messages of the joint study carried out by the ESCAP and ASEAN Secretariats under the auspices of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM). The study (2019), entitled *Ready for the Dry Years: Building Resilience to Drought in South-East Asia*, projects that there will be many more dry years ahead, and the area affected by drought is likely to intensify, shift and expand which could slow down poverty reduction and widen inequality. Its key message is that while drought may be inevitable, its impacts can be reduced if timely interventions are made. The study was released at the 34th Meeting of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) in April 2019 hosted by the Government of Myanmar in Mandalay. During the launch of the study, several delegates had recommended that in-country multi-stakeholder dialogues involving high-level policy decision-makers would be helpful in imparting policy urgency and accelerating momentum on the priority actions needed at the national and regional levels.

¹ United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) (2019). *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2019: The Disaster Riskscape Across Asia-Pacific*. Sales No.: E.19.II.F.12. Available at: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/publications/Asia-Pacific%20Disaster%20Report%202019_full%20version.pdf

Objectives:

Led by the respective ACDM focal points, multi-stakeholder dialogues are being organized in each of the four countries covered by the *Ready for the Dry Years* study, namely Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, and Viet Nam.

Presided by **H.E. General KUN KIM**, Senior Minister in Charge of Special Mission and First Vice-President of NCDM, the drought multi-stakeholder dialogue in Cambodia will convene high-level officials to:

1. Mobilize attention on the urgency of addressing drought;
2. Communicate the *Ready for the Dry Years* key findings to government ministries and other development stakeholders;
3. Highlight the perspectives of various stakeholders vis-à-vis drought occurrence, impacts, and solutions;
4. Agree on the next steps for ASEAN-wide actions and strategies for building resilience to drought: ASEAN Declaration and ASEAN Plan of Action.

References:

- United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) (2020). *The Disaster Riskscape across South-East Asia: Key Takeaways for Stakeholders*. ST/ESCAP/2885. Available at <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/IDD-APDR-Subreport-SEA.pdf>.
- ESCAP and ASEAN (2019). *Ready for the Dry Years: Building Resilience to Drought in South-East Asia*. Available at <https://www.unescap.org/publications/ready-dry-years-building-resilience-drought-south-east-asia>.