UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (ESCAP)

EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON GEO-REFERENCE INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINING THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

SUMMARY MEETING REPORT

23-25 April 2014

BANGKOK

1 This report has been prepared without any formal editing.
A. Organization of the Meeting

1. The Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Geo-reference information systems for disaster risk management and sustaining the Community of Practice was held in Bangkok, Thailand from 23-25 April 2014.

2. The EGM was attended by experts and representatives from the following countries in the region: Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Mongolia, Nepal, Maldives, Philippines, and Thailand.

3. The EGM was also attended by the representatives of United Nations (UN) bodies such as United Nation Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), other entities like the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Institute of Space Technology, Pakistan and the Geo-informatics center at Asian Institute of Technology. List of the participants is attached as Annex 1.

4. Mr. Keran Wang, Chief of the Space Applications Section of the Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction (IDD), ESCAP, welcomed participants of the meeting by delivering his welcome address.

5. The EGM adopted the programme, which is in Annex 2.

7. Mr. Keran Wang, delivering his inaugural speech mentioned that the main objective of the meeting was to show case the geo-portals developed by the pilot countries under the UNDA 7 project. He also urged the participants from member countries to show the official on-line version of the country geo-portal. He informed the participants that under the DA 7 project 7 member countries were selected based on their country requests. Further, he said that the project criteria stipulate that pilot countries have to be from LDCs LLDCs and SIDS. Mr. Keran stressed the importance of active participation of these member countries in developing the geo-portal, since the international and regional space based agencies could support their countries by providing access to free satellite imageries. The geo-portals once establish could provide countries with evidence based information for decision making on disaster risk management and preparedness. He also reiterated the importance of information and knowledge sharing and referred to the community of practice developed under the project. He requested all member country participants to register with the community of practice to have access to all the knowledge generated through the project.

8. Mr. Syed. T. Ahmed gave a detail account of the project activities over the past two years and emphasized on the effectiveness of the technical assistance training programmes conducted by ESCAP. Capacity development on the use of GIS for disaster risk management and the hands-on practical experience provided under the technical assistance training have effectively empowered government officials from the respective agencies to establish and use the geo-reference information systems.

9. Rajindra Ariyabandu gave a brief introduction to the community of practice (COP) developed under the project, its current status and how it can be useful to the member countries to share knowledge among the disaster risk management community.

10. The two consultancy teams headed by Professor Nitin Tripati, Dr. Hamid Mehamood and Dr. Lal Samarakoon, represented by Mr. Ramesh de Silva gave brief introductions to their interaction with the project and the final outcomes from their interventions.
B. Conclusions and Recommendations

I. Establishment of Geo-referenced Information System

11. The EGM applauded the successful development of geo-portals by the pilot countries and the knowledge and understanding acquired mainly due to project activities.

12. The status of the geo-portals were showcased by member countries. There were 5 pilot countries (Nepal, Cooks Island, Kyrgyzstan, Fiji and Mongolia) present at the meeting. The country geo-portals were in varying status of development depending on the skills acquired and frequency of interaction with the consultancy teams provided under the project.

13. ESCAP agreed with the member countries to provide the services of the consultancy teams to complete the development process of the geo-portals in countries which are in the process of establishing the geo-portal.

14. The community of practice has been developed and it is on-line for the use of member countries. ESCAP requested all present at the meeting to register with the community of practice to start sharing knowledge on the COP platform. ESCAP noted with appreciation that member countries have realised the value of the COP as a viable platform for knowledge sharing on geo-referenced information for disaster risk management. ESCAP also noted that some countries have already started to establish their own country community of practice among geo-DRM community.

II. Capacity Development

15. Country participant request for more training on geo-referenced information portal establishment and use was the common request from all the participants. However, Nepal requested for more focused training of at least one month duration for one technical and one administrative (decision maker) staff. The latter was suggested so that they could observe the benefit of the geo-portal for DRR and the use of the community of practice as a platform for communication. Cooks Islands requested for short term training on disaster risk management. This was particularly due to the lack of understanding on the substantive knowledge on DRR by those who are working in ICT and GIS. They also requested for training on GIS skills like data uploads and analysis. Bhutan specifically mentioned about the lack of new ICT knowledge and requested for further training from AIT. Lao PDR mentioned that they lack both technical and institutional support to use geo-reference information for DRR and requested ESCAP to facilitate technical training and policy awareness to decision makers. Indonesia (represented by LAPAN) requested training on the use of GIS for DRR since many of the trained staff are either leaving or being promoted to other posts. Myanmar and Maldives requested for server space besides the need for further training.

16. Consultants emphasized that training and capacity building is a continuous process and the current need is to arrange short-term training of minimum one month. It was mentioned that few days to a week training is good to understand the concepts and establish the prototype but more in-depth training is needed in the long term to consolidate the knowledge on use of geo-portal for DRR. The consultants were of the view that since the project has established the geo-portal in many countries the current need is to customized the
portals to country requirements. It was mentioned that customization could be easily done with available access to the virtual servers at the Chinese university of Hong-Kong and at AIT. The consultant also made reference to Masters level courses offered at AIT on Disaster Management and Preparedness which can be used by countries to train their staff in the long-term.

17. ESCAP - mentioned the current programme of work at the Space Application Section at IDD and requested the countries to come out with their specific request on training requirements. It was pointed out that the country participants should be more précises on the specific training requirement rather than requesting for general capacity building. ESCAP also reiterated the importance of sensitizing the policy makers and decision makers on the importance of geo-reference information system for disaster risk reduction. In terms of training, ESCAP mentioned that there will be training programmes organized in Fiji with the support of SOPAC for the Pacific region, AIT for the South-East Asia sub-region and CSSTEP (India) for South Asia sub-region. Besides, ESCAP also mentioned the opportunity for long term training (9 months) available on GIS and RS for disaster risk management at CSSTEP India. ESCAP can also organize trainer- training programmes (TOT) and awareness programmes for policy makers if there are request from the member countries.

III. Final Regional Workshop

19. ESCAP informed the member country participants that the final regional workshop for sharing experience from the project outcomes will be held in June 2014 at the UNCC in Bangkok.

C. Adoption of the Conclusions and Recommendations

20. The EGM unanimously agreed that the report of the meeting will be drafted by the ESCAP secretariat and sent for member country concurrence.

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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Expert Group Meeting on Geo-reference Disaster Risk Management Information System in Asia-Pacific Region

Bangkok, 15-17 February 2012

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Annex 2

FOR PARTICIPANTS ONLY

Expert Group Meeting on Geo-reference Disaster Risk Management Information System in Asia-Pacific Region

Bangkok, 15-17 February 2012

AGENDA

1. Opening of meeting

2. Election of officers

3. Adoption of agenda

4. Improving disaster risk preparedness in the ESCAP region

5. Information sharing in geo-informatics in the context of developing and disaster-prone/high risk countries in the region (with focus on countries with special needs)

6. Issues and challenges in establishing geo-referenced information system/platform in the region

7. Way forward

8. Conclusions and recommendations

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Annex 3

FOR PARTICIPANTS ONLY

Expert Group Meeting on Geo-reference Disaster Risk Management Information System in Asia-Pacific Region

Bangkok, 15-17 February 2012

PROGRAMME

Day 1 (15 February 2012, Wednesday)

08:00 - 09:00 REGISTRATION

09:00 - 09:30 Opening Session:
- Welcome address by Mr. Shun-ichi Murata, Deputy Executive Secretary, ESCAP
- Election of officers
- Adoption of agenda
- Photo session

09:30 - 10:00 BREAK

10:00 - 11:45 Session: 1- Improving disaster risk preparedness in the ESCAP region
- ‘Objectives and expected outcomes of the UNDA project: Improving disaster risk preparedness in ESCAP region, and the current expert group meeting’ by Mr. Ram Tiwari, IDD, ESCAP
- ‘Geo-reference for disaster risk management – concepts, needs and gaps in Asia-Pacific region by ESCAP’ by Mr. Nitin Tripathi, Consultant, IDD, ESCAP

11:45 - 13:00 LUNCH

13:00 - 14:45 Session: 2- Information sharing in geo-informatics in the context of developing and disaster-prone/high risk countries in the region (with focus on countries with special needs)
- ‘Geo-information for disaster risk reduction in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region’ by Mr. Basanta Shrestha, ICIMOD, Nepal
- ‘Data needs and SOPAC RS service for Pacific Island Countries’ by Mr. Wolf Forstreuter, SPC-SOPAC, Fiji
- ‘Georeferenced Disaster Risk Management – Scopes and Challenges in Papua New Guinea and the Eastern Pacific’ by Mr. Dilip Kumar Pal, PNG University

In each substantive session (1-5), there was a discussion including questions and answers (after one or more presentations)
of Technology, Papua New Guinea
- ‘Use of geo-referenced data for DRM in Central Asia, problems and prospective’ by Mr. Akylbek Chymyrov, KSUCTA, Kyrgyzstan

14:45 - 15:15 BREAK

15:15 - 17:00 Session: 3- Information sharing in geo-informatics in the context of developing and disaster-prone/high risk countries in the region - Selected case studies
- ‘Geo-referenced Information System for Disaster Risk Reduction in China’ by Mr. Ma Zhaoting, NASM, China
- ‘Satellite Applications for Disaster Risk Reduction’ by Mr. Shinichi Mizumoto, JAXA, Japan
- ‘Landslide susceptibility mapping using GIS: A cast study of Korea’ by Mr. Lee Saro, KIGAM, Republic of Korea
- ‘Space-enabled Products and Services for DRR/DRM: Indian Initiatives’ by Mr. S.K. Srivastav, IIRS/ISRO, India

Day 2 (16 February 2012, Thursday)

08:55 - 09:45 Session: 3- Information sharing in geo-informatics in the context of developing and disaster-prone/high risk countries in the region - Selected case studies (continued)
- ‘Space Technology for Disaster Management in Sri Lanka: country profile, national perspectives and vision...’ by Mr. R. P de Silva, UVA Wellasa University, Sri Lanka
- ‘Thailand Disaster: Space Technology and Geo-information on Flood Management’ by Mr. Chaowalit Silapathong, GISTDA, Thailand

09:45 - 10:10 BREAK

10:10 - 11:50 Session: 4- Issues and challenges in establishing geo-referenced information system/platform in the region
- ‘Desinventar and disaster loss databases’ by Mr. Sujit Mohanty, UN-ISDR
- ‘Issues and Challenges to Geo-referenced Information Systems in the Region’ by Mr. Craig Williams, UNOCHA
- ‘Geospatial information for damage and loss assessment’ by Mr. Nokco Ratanavong, IDD, ESCAP
- ‘Georeferencing and Satellite Image Support: Lessons learned, Challenges and Opportunities’ by Mr. Shirish Ravan, UN-SPIDER, UNOOSA

11:50 - 13:00 LUNCH

13:00 - 14:15 Session: 4- Issues and challenges in establishing geo-referenced information system/platform in the region (continued)
- ‘Geo-reference information, tracking disaster risks and their socio-economic impact’ by Mr. Clovis Freire, MPDD, ESCAP
14:15 - 14:40  BREAK

14:40 - 16:45  Session: 5- Way forward

- ‘Planned activities and tentative schedule of the UNDA project: Improving disaster risk preparedness in the ESCAP region’ by Mr. Ram Tiwari, IDD, ESCAP
- ‘Development of standardized information system containing socio-economic statistics and geo-referenced information’ by Mr. Nitin Tripathi, Consultant, IDD, ESCAP
- ‘Building a Community of Practices (COP) for Information sharing in DRR and Disaster Management’ by Mr. Rajindra Ariyabandhu, Consultant, IDD, ESCAP
- Global & regional action - examples from the international statistics community by ESCAP (Ms. Rikke Mun Hansen, SD)
- ‘Tentative outlines of the regional training workshop’ by Mr. Nitin Tripathi, Consultant, IDD, ESCAP
- ‘Outcome of the Needs assessment questionnaire survey and finalization of the needs assessment survey report by ESCAP’ by Mr. Nitin Tripathi, Consultant, IDD, ESCAP

Day 3 (17 February 2012, Friday)

10:00 - 12:00  Session: 6- Conclusions and recommendations

- Discussions of the draft report
- Adoption of the summary of the report (conclusions and recommendations)
- Closing of the meeting

- The End -