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# FOREWORD



As we approach the end of 2015, the member States of the United Nations have taken stock of the 15-year anti-poverty effort embodied in the Millennium Development Goals and endorsed the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, framed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This new holistic and transformative agenda sets the strategic direction for building global resilience, among others by responding to concerns about the impacts of climate change, such as rising sea levels and increasing damage to ecosystems and biodiversity.

Prior to the adoption of the SDGs in September 2015, the global community agreed to reinforce the Goals with a new international framework to address the inextricable link between disaster risk reduction and sustainable development. In March, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 replaced the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015. The Sendai outcome will guide the international community in its collective support to regions and countries in strengthening their resilience to disasters. In addition, member States will gather for the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris, in December, to forge a new international agreement on climate action, ideally backed by the necessary resources for climate mitigation and adaptation. These new frameworks will have a profound impact on the lives of people all over the world for years to come.

The countries of Asia and the Pacific have borne the lion's share of natural disasters. Over 40 per cent of the 3,979 disasters that occurred globally between 2005 and 2014 occurred in our region, resulting in the loss of half a million people, representing almost 60 per cent of the total global deaths related to disasters. More than 1.4 billion people were affected by these disasters, constituting 80 per cent of those affected globally. Our region has also faced severe economic damage of more than half a trillion dollars over the same time period, accounting for 45 per cent of global total.

This year was no exception to these trends. Across Asia and the Pacific disasters have continued to undermine hard-won development gains. In March 2015, cyclone Pam caused widespread damage in Vanuatu, and also impacted neighboring countries: almost 166,000 people - more than half of Vanuatu's population - were affected. In April, an earthquake of 7.6 magnitude struck Nepal, leaving nearly 9,000 people dead and destroying more than half a million houses. This massive destruction has impeded Nepal's bid to graduate from the status of a least developed country to a developing country by 2022. In May and June, India and Pakistan reported more than 1,000 deaths from a heat wave. In July and August, heavy monsoon rains claimed hundreds of lives and affected more than a million people in South and South-East Asia.

For a region at such high risk of disasters, building resilience is not a question of choice, but rather a collective imperative. Therefore, countries in Asia and the Pacific have identified disaster risk reduction as one of their core priorities, and requested that ESCAP intensify its regional partnership and support for disaster risk reduction and resilience as an integral part of achieving sustainable development in the region.

ESCAP's work stands out for the assessment, identification and monitoring of a range of hazards, be they droughts, tropical cyclones, earthquakes or floods, including their impacts on people, economies, cities and the environment. This is why we have promoted the benefits of early warning and information management, some of which are often neglected, and advanced South-South cooperation to tap into the knowledge of more experienced partners. Building resilience of communities calls for long-term risk management, through strengthening of catastrophic insurance systems, social safety nets and relief delivery mechanisms, which become critical in times of disaster. Effectively managing the ecosystem, and deploying solutions based on emerging science and technology, are some of the best disaster risk mitigation approaches. ESCAP continues to offer a platform for exchanges on transboundary disaster risk in Asia and the Pacific. Integration of disaster risk reduction is at the heart of sustainable development, and this Report offers insights on how to operationalize the process in a way that fosters risk-sensitive development.

Regional cooperation is effective in addressing disasters, constituting a fundamental point underpinning all of ESCAP's work. Only by coming together in the spirit of cooperation can the Asia-Pacific region hope to become truly disaster resilient and achieve sustainable development in the future.

In this context, the 2015 *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report* is a useful guide in the pursuit of greater disaster resilience and sustainable development for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shamsah Akhtar', with a horizontal line underneath.

**Shamshad Akhtar**

Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and  
Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic and  
Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific