

Distr.: For participants only
24 August 2021

Original: English

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction

Seventh session

Bangkok and online, 25–27 August 2021

Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

**Overview of the work of the secretariat and the
United Nations system at the regional level**

**Thematic expert meeting on the implementation of the
health aspects of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk
Reduction 2015–2030**

I. Background

1. The onset of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has accentuated cascading risks emanating from the convergence of multiple natural and biological disasters in the Asia-Pacific region. The impacts of such disasters, exacerbated by climate change, are reshaping and expanding the contours of the region's riskscape.

2. The thematic expert meeting on the implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, held on 24 August 2021, was convened pursuant to resolution 77/1 of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in which the Commission encouraged member States to work regionally, with the support of the Executive Secretary and in cooperation with other concerned United Nations bodies and relevant stakeholders, to promote discussions on the implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework, including by taking note of the Bangkok Principles for the implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and other relevant regional and subregional frameworks and initiatives, by convening a thematic meeting in conjunction with the seventh session of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction and reporting on its outcomes at that session of the Committee, with a view to strengthening post-COVID-19 resilience and disaster preparedness in the region.

3. The meeting was organized against the backdrop of the third ESCAP Disaster Resilience Week, on the theme “Building back better after COVID-19: addressing cascading risks and systemic gaps for resilient people and economies”, which was held from 23 to 27 August 2021.

* ESCAP/CDR/2021/L.1.

4. The participants at the meeting benefited from a series of thematic discussion sessions held during the Week on various pathways to build systemic resilience with a view to addressing multi-hazard risks from both natural and biological hazards.

5. The thematic sessions were attended by experts in the areas of disaster risk reduction, public health and climate change adaptation, as well as from key development sectors. The experts came from member States; relevant United Nations entities, such as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the United Nations Satellite Centre of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the World Health Organization and the World Meteorological Organization; and from other entities, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation, the Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia, the Coalition for Disaster-Resilient Infrastructure, The Rockefeller Foundation, the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Asian Institute of Technology.

II. Outcomes

6. In the context of the overall mandate of ESCAP to promote cooperation in disaster risk reduction at the regional level and with other concerned United Nations bodies and relevant stakeholders, the following recommendations emerged from the thematic expert meeting:

(a) A regional strategy should be drafted on the topic of building back better for disaster, climate and health resilience, with a view to managing cascading risks and helping to implement the Bangkok Principles and other relevant regional and subregional frameworks and initiatives;

(b) Existing regional cooperation mechanisms and subregional initiatives should be leveraged, including the Asia-Pacific Disaster Resilience Network established by the Committee at its sixth session;

(c) A longer-term, holistic and more strategic approach should be designed in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals, the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement, as well as with the four interrelated work streams on policy coherence, integrated multi-hazard early warning systems, climate adaptation and resilience, and investing in resilient infrastructure (see ESCAP/CDR/2021/2);

(d) Policy coherence should be promoted with regard to disaster and public health risk management and disaster and pandemic preparedness, with a view to capitalizing on the experiences of the disaster management, health and planning agencies of member States, concerned United Nations bodies, regional and subregional organizations and relevant stakeholders;

(e) Regional and subregional cooperation should be scaled up to integrate biological hazards into multi-hazard early warning systems, and a multi-hazard, multisectoral, transboundary and systemic risk approach should be pursued, in particular through strengthened early warning system initiatives;

(f) The integration of climate adaptation and resilience into post-COVID-19 recovery efforts and disaster risk reduction should be promoted, taking into account the region's vast and diverse experiences, including those of ASEAN and the North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation;

(g) An enabling environment should be created for enhanced people-centred public and private investment in public health emergency preparedness and disaster risk reduction, including through the Issue-Based Coalition on Building Resilience and the Coalition for Disaster-Resilient Infrastructure.

7. The Chair of the thematic expert meeting is requested to report on its outcomes to the Committee at its seventh session, under agenda item 4 on the overview of the work of the secretariat and the United Nations system at the regional level.
