

Summary Assessment

Fourth session of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction

Bangkok
27-29 October 2015

I. Introduction

The fourth session of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 27-29 October 2015.

A questionnaire assessing the relevance, effectiveness and quality of the meeting was distributed to each delegation of ESCAP members and associate members. The total number of submitted questionnaires came from 11 of the 28 members and associate members in attendance at the session. The overall response rate is therefore 39% (N=11/28). The present assessment was prepared on the basis of these questionnaire responses.

In line with the secretariat's efforts to move toward paper smart meetings, an online version of the questionnaire was offered alongside the paper version.

The main purpose of this assessment is to support the secretariat's ongoing efforts to improve its servicing of Committee sessions.

II. Attendance

The Committee session was attended by 45% (N=28/62) of all ESCAP members and associate members, with 118 individual participants. The Committee session was also attended by 44 participants from other entities, including other States, United Nations bodies and agencies, intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations. This was an increase on the previous session in 2013 which had an attendance rate of 34%.

More than half of delegations were headed by officials from the respective Capital (68%, N=19/28) – four of which (21%) at ministerial level – whereas the remaining 32% (N=9/28) were represented through their embassies in Bangkok.

III. Methodology

For each statement below, an index between 100 and 0 is given, whereby, at a value of 100, all respondents strongly agree with the statement, and, at a value of 0, all respondents strongly disagree. The formula¹ we have used is based on the same principles as the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index² (HDI). This allows the calculation of a unit-free index between 0 and 1 from all received responses for each statement. This enables indices to be added together as well as compared among each other.

IV. Relevance of the session

Respondents generally felt that the Committee session was relevant to the needs of the region. As presented with the aggregate ratings in Table 1, there was widespread agreement that the agenda items reflected the development trends and issues of the Asian and Pacific region (82), and that they also reflected the needs and priorities of their respective countries (77).

There were two suggestions on how to improve the relevance of the Committee session to the needs and priorities of the Asian and Pacific region: firstly, to focus on capacity building in early warning systems and recovery; and secondly, to ensure disaster management approaches are directed towards sustainable economic development.

Table 1

EVALUATED STATEMENT	INDEX (0-100)
The agenda items reflected the development trends/issues of the Asian and Pacific region.	82
The agenda items addressed the needs and priorities of my country/territory.	77

V. Effectiveness of the session

Overall, as can be seen from Table 2, respondents found the session to be effective in promoting a collaborative approach to addressing the development challenges at the regional and subregional levels (80), promoting dialogue on regional and subregional approaches (80), highlighting regional development trends and issues (77), identifying priority areas and emerging issues in the region (77), and addressing gender-related

¹ Index = actual value of all aggregated responses - minimum value of all aggregated responses / maximum value of all aggregated responses - minimum value of all aggregated responses

² More can be found at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr_2013_en_technotes.pdf

issues (73). Furthermore, the session documents were found to be of good quality, concise, and stating the issues clearly (77).

Two suggestions were made to improve the Committee session’s effectiveness in achieving its mandate: firstly, that the discussions be more interactive and that at least 15 minutes time for Q&A be allowed after panel discussions; and secondly, that there be more focus on quantification of DRR effects in national and cross-border economic development.

Table 2

EVALUATED STATEMENT	INDEX (0-100)
The Committee session effectively highlighted regional development trends and issues.	77
The Committee session effectively identified priority areas and emerging issues in the region.	77
The Committee session effectively promoted dialogue on regional and subregional approaches to disaster risk reduction development.	80
The Committee session effectively addressed gender-related issues in the field of disaster risk reduction.	73
The Committee session effectively promoted a collaborative approach to addressing the disaster risk reduction development challenges at the regional and subregional levels.	80
The session documents were of high quality, concise, and clearly stated the issues.	77

VI. Substantive outcome of the Committee

As shown in Table 3, the respondents mostly agreed that the substantive outcome of the deliberations on each substantive agenda item met their expectations to a great extent, in particular items 4: Regional mechanisms for disaster risk reduction in the context of the post-2015 development agenda (80); and 5: Regional multi-hazard early warning systems (82).

Table 3

EVALUATED STATEMENT	INDEX (0-100)
Item 4: Regional mechanisms for disaster risk reduction in the context of the post-2015 development agenda	80
Item 5: Regional multi-hazard early warning systems	82
Item 6: Risk-sensitive development	77
Item 7: Development of disaster-related statistics	77
Item 8: Regional cooperation on the applications of space technology and geographic information systems for disaster risk reduction	77

VII. Efficiency of the organizational aspects of the session

The overall efficiency of the organizational aspects of the Committee session was rated very positively, as shown in Table 4. Respondents felt that the servicing by the secretariat was efficient and effective (86), and that the organization of work prior and in between committee sessions enabled the session to proceed efficiently (84). Respondents also indicated that the communications from the secretariat to the member States on the preparations for the meeting were effective (80).

The time available for discussion during the meeting was also rated positively, but slightly less so (70).

There were two suggestions on how to improve the efficiency of the organizational and servicing aspects of the Committee session. Firstly, it was suggested that ensuring that countries are contacted through the proper official channels would avoid information gaps and increase participation.³ Secondly, it was suggested that the programme of the session be posted online at least 15 days prior to the start of the meeting to allow delegates enough time to organize their programme.

³ For legislative and other intergovernmental meetings, the secretariat continues to communicate with the member and associate member governments in accordance with the official channels of communication. In addition, communication to the Seats of Governments is copied to the concerned line ministries to expedite response.

Table 4

EVALUATED STATEMENT	INDEX (0-100)
The time available for discussion during the meeting was adequate.	70
The servicing by the secretariat was efficient and effective.	86
The communications from the secretariat to the member States on the preparations for the meeting were effective.	80
The organization of work prior and in between Committee sessions enabled the session to proceed efficiently.	84

VIII. Other comments

According to respondents, the most successful aspects of the Committee session included:

- Debate on multi hazard early warning system and discussion on Sendai framework
- Enhanced partnership and knowledge sharing
- Launching of 2015 Asia-Pacific disaster report
- Regional cooperation on the applications of space technology and geographic information systems for disaster risk reduction

There were also some suggestions on aspects that could have been improved:

- Increase discussion on risk sensitive development and post disaster needs assessment
- Strengthen focus on operational and management requirements before and after the disasters.
- Increase information dissemination to the delegations of respective countries.
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- Inclusion of a full list of participants in the report. ⁴
- Inclusion of country statements relating to specific agenda item in the final report.⁵

Comments on what could have been done to encourage greater engagement from delegations at this meeting included the following :

⁴ The list of participants is issued as a separate document as per UN/ESCAP practice

⁵ Country statements should be appropriately reflected but not be fully included in the report as per ESCAP practice

- The respective countries should be given detailed brief in advance on the issues to be taken up in order to select the appropriate delegation.
- Training and support (for delegations, including in areas of ICT/GIS as well as PDNA training).
- Invite panelists from disaster affected states as they have first-hand knowledge from the ground and more interaction with experts and representatives of areas at risk and under disasters.

IX. Conclusion

Overall, in conclusion, responding delegates felt that the 4th session of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction was successful.

To summarize the main trends above, the session was generally seen as relevant to the needs of the region; as effectively highlighting regional development trends and issues; and promoting a collaborative approach to addressing the development challenges at the regional and subregional levels. The outcomes of the deliberations on the substantive agenda items met the expectations of delegations; especially agenda items on regional multi-hazard early warning systems and regional mechanisms for disaster risk reduction in the context of the post-2015 development agenda. The efficiency of the session received particularly positive feedback, including the servicing of the session by the secretariat, and the organization of work prior and in between sessions.