Resilient recovery of graduating countries in Asia-Pacific: A multi-dimensional risk-lens

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12:15 – 13:45 Bangkok Time

Registration: [https://undrr.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_m4VnhBIRXyUFHQ40t-w](https://undrr.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_m4VnhBIRXyUFHQ40t-w)


Countries that are graduating from the least developed category often face the same climate and disaster risks they faced before graduation, while financing remains a challenge. Considering that development pathways that are not informed by disaster risks could inadvertently create new risks, graduating countries risk to lose their hard-fought development gains to disasters.

The LDC graduation process and COVID-19 recovery offer countries and development partners a window of opportunity to integrate disaster risk reduction into economic, social, and environmental development plans, to ensure economic growth and development are risk informed, resilient and sustainable, and help prevent the creation of new disaster risk during and after graduation.

This session will discuss how countries with the necessary support through international cooperation can achieve this, and share insights of graduating countries and development partners and experts.

Background
One of the most highlighted elements of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 (the Istanbul Programme of Action) is its graduation target. However, relatively less attention has been paid to the prospects of sustaining the development trajectory beyond graduation. This reflects the focus of the international community on achieving the graduation target itself, often leading to the misperception that once graduated, LDCs will face development challenges similar to other developing countries.

However, the development trajectory that propels a country to graduation has important implications for the challenges and vulnerabilities it will face after graduation, and the means at its disposal to address them. For instance, the phasing out of international support measures and its impact on external financial assistance, besides trade-related challenges, has been cited as a key challenge.

Countries like Vanuatu, the latest country in Asia-Pacific to have graduated, remain highly vulnerable to disasters and climatic events that threaten to roll-back development gains both through sudden-onset and high-impact disasters and through localized high-frequency and low-impact events. Given the high level of climate vulnerability of Asia-Pacific countries, graduated countries face the dual challenge of addressing the growing magnitude and intensity of risk, resulting from climate-induced extreme events, and the loss of access to LDC-specific climate financing. The COVID-19 pandemic has added a new dimension to the risk levels by compounding the impacts of multiple crises, threatening to roll-back progress towards sustainable development and exacerbating inequalities. As a result, the pandemic has delayed or extended the graduation timeline of several LDCs.

Graduating countries should revisit their development and contributing strategies to consider the new dimensions that the graduation process adds to the national development vision. Hence, graduation provides renewed opportunities to integrate disaster risk reduction and climate resilience into national development policy and investments. Disaster loss and risk data, in particular disaggregated data, is a crucial first step to understanding risk and developing and implementing risk-informed policies.

Hence, graduating countries in Asia-Pacific need to review their development pathways to ensure is both sustainable and risk-informed, while charting and implementing their COVID-19 recovery plans. Such recovery plans should harness the co-benefits of building climate and disaster resilience and ensuring that no one is left behind. The Voluntary National Reviews also provide a key opportunity to integrate some of these elements for resilient development.

Session Outcome

Graduating LDCs should prepare appropriate strategies and action plans and engage with their development and trading partners to ensure smooth transition following their graduation. Developing climate and disaster resilience is a key element that needs to be considered as such countries recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The side event will outline the insights of such graduating countries, together with experts on the topic. The event will result in key recommendations that will be incorporated into the 2022 Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction.

Targeted participants will include stakeholders from disaster risk reduction, climate resilience and governance communities.

Speakers
Keynote Presenter

Secretariat of the UN Committee for Development Policy
Mr. Roland Mollerus
Chief

Panellists:

1. Lao PDR
   Mr. Oula Somchanhmavong,
   Deputy Director General, Department of Planning,
   Ministry of Planning and Investment

2. Vanuatu
   Ms. Esline Garaebiti Bule (TBC)
   Director General Climate Change
   Ministry of Climate Change Adaptation, Meteorology, Geo-Hazards, Environment, Energy and
   Disaster Management

3. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
   Mr. Khursid Alam
   Assistant Resident Representative, Bangladesh

4. Pacific Disability Forum
   Ms. Nelly Caleb
   Coordinator for Vanuatu Disability Promotion & Advocacy Association (VDPA)

Moderator:

UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
Mr. Marco Toscano-Rivalta
Chief, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific