ESCAP Statement at APPDRR 2021
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(Time allocation: 2 minutes)

Introduction

While the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic itself have been tragic, the impacts of the pandemic on people and economies have been compounded with climate related extreme events. This year, along with the pandemic, the Asia Pacific region has witnessed unprecedented extreme weather events.

Key issues

Our recently launched Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2021 assesses the human and economic costs of converging natural and biological hazards, that are occurring along with climate change. Three key messages have emerged.

First, the COVID-19 pandemic shows that countries across the globe are ill-prepared to deal with multiple overlapping and cascading crises. Tropical cyclones, for example, can lead to floods, which lead to disease, which exacerbates poverty. The Report identifies specific hotspots of cascading risks, where people are at greatest risk from overlaps of natural and biological hazards and highlights the vulnerabilities of marginal groups.

Second, the Report estimates that if we do nothing, then under the worst-case climate change scenario, annual economic losses could rise to $1.3 trillion; or 4.2 per cent of the region’s GDP.

Third, the Report notes that annual adaptation costs under the same worst-case climate scenario could amount to US$ 270 billion, equivalent to 0.85% of regional GDP, significantly less than the estimated annual economic losses of 4.2 per cent of regional GDP.

The report has been and will continue to be used to monitor DRR related goals and targets of the Sendai Framework and the SDGs.

Solutions to address the key issues
It is critical for countries to build resilience to respond to converging hazards that are impacting their people and their economy.

ESCAP has long advocated for shifting disaster risk reduction from a single hazard, single sector perspective to a multi-hazard, multi-sectoral and systemic perspective. ESCAP’s Asia Pacific Disaster Resilience Network mobilizes expertise and resources of existing networks and partnerships across to develop practical solutions across the Asia-Pacific region.

One example of the support under the APDRN is the Risk and Resilience Portal. The portal, serves as a ‘one stop shop’ to support risk-informed policymaking enabling Member countries to:

- identify hotspots of exposure for people and infrastructure which can support monitoring of Global Target A (disaster mortality), B (people affected, C (economic losses) and D (infrastructure loss).
- identify where climate change is expanding and intensifying these hotspots,
- highlight potential priorities for adaption, through national and subregional benefit-cost ratios, and
- estimate the country-specific cost of adaptation for planning and development purposes that can support achievement of Target A, B, C and D.

Conclusion

The impacts of cascading crises including pandemics and climate change are being played out in real time before our eyes. As we look to the future of human health, we must recognize that disasters have no demarcations between natural and biological hazards, nor do they know any boundaries. Through the Portal, ESCAP can support the Sendai Framework Target - particularly those related to Global Target A, B, C, and D. and E for the Asia Pacific Region. ESCAP stands ready to partner with all stakeholders to build a more resilient Asia-Pacific region.