



**Talking Points**  
**High-level Meeting on the Ten-year Work Programme of ADPC**

**Mr. Nicholas Rosellini**  
**Deputy Assistant Administrator &**  
**Deputy Regional Director**  
**Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific**

**March 23, 2011**

---

His Excellency the Prime Minister of Thailand

Distinguished Excellencies and government representatives

Ladies and gentlemen

---

On behalf of UNDP, I join previous speakers in congratulating the Asia Disaster Preparedness Centre on the occasion of its Silver Jubilee, and thank organizers for the opportunity to make a few remarks.

As an organization that advocates knowledge sharing, strongly promotes south-south cooperation and is committed to building the capacities of partners, I am delighted that UNDP has been associated with the establishment of the ADPC.

Natural disasters exert an enormous toll on development and pose a significant threat to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The majority of losses are concentrated in the developing world with the poor often bearing the greatest cost in terms of lives and livelihoods. Today, 85 per cent of the people exposed to earthquakes, tropical cyclones, floods and droughts live in countries having either medium to low human development.

The nearly 4,000 recorded disasters from 2000 to 2009 killed more than 780,000 people and affected more than two billion. Annual economic losses associated with disasters averaged US\$ 660 billion in the 1990s, up from US\$ 214 billion in the 1980s.

In December 1997, the UN General Assembly mandated UNDP to conduct operational activities for natural disaster mitigation, prevention and preparedness. Between 2004 and 2009 UNDP has programmed over USD 600 million in the Asia-Pacific region for disaster reduction and recovery through programmes in over 20 countries.

Sustained engagement in countries such as Bangladesh and Vietnam for example, has resulted in dramatically reduced disaster losses. Cyclone Sidr, which affected 9 million people in Bangladesh in 2007, resulted in 4000 deaths but, this was much less than the 140,000 that died in cyclone events in 1991 and, more than 500,000 deaths in 1970. This stark contrast is a result of decades of purposeful and committed risk management effort by Bangladesh backed by long-term support from UNDP and other international partners.

Since the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, UNDP has worked at the regional level to assist countries develop appropriate institutional and legislative systems for disaster reduction, connect communities to early warning systems, and provide tools and standards for collection of historical data on disaster losses that countries can use to evaluate risk and guide risk management investments.

As a key member of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) system, UNDP plays leadership roles in specific technical areas in line with the priorities of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) and a central role in supporting governments to implement the HFA at country level. UNDP actively coordinates with other UN and non-UN inter-governmental organizations, such as ADPC, has defined specific areas of cooperation with these partners with the advocacy and facilitation support of the ISDR Secretariat.

As I mentioned previously, DRR is a development issue. It is therefore crucial to address underlying risk factors that lead to disasters when hazards strike. In this context, UNDP works with national governments throughout the entire disaster management cycle from prevention to recovery. Building capacity of governments in mainstreaming DRR into national development plans is a key aspect of our work

We also promote sustainable livelihoods and reduced future losses through an integrated approach to recovery that includes disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. In Pakistan we are now working with national and local authorities to develop capacity to lead and manage recovery coordination and programming, as well as identify, analyze and reduce disaster risks. This will promote and sustain the recovery process and foster national ownership. Experiences in high-risk countries such as Bangladesh and Viet Nam demonstrate that such comprehensive approaches are successful in significantly reducing losses.

---

Some reflection on the past and its implications for the future is a way to better understand how to more efficiently and effectively to reduce exposure to hazards. For example, with major demographic shifts to urban areas, we need to focus also on urban risk management. We should also reduce the rate of depletion of natural resources that results in the collapse of biodiversity and climate destabilization. Experience suggests that only strong concerted efforts at community, national and international levels supported by up-to-date knowledge on disaster risk reduction will make a difference for people affected by disasters.

UNDP has long cooperated with the ADPC in the area of disaster risk reduction. In the recent past, we have been working with ADPC to mainstream disaster risk reduction into sector plans, for example incorporating DRR modules into the national curriculum and teachers training systems of Lao PDR, Philippines and Cambodia. In addition, ADPC supported UNDP create the Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early Warning System (RIMES), an intergovernmental organization with 24 State members. Last November, UNDP-RIMES and ADPC jointly organized a successful 5 days climate risk management training for 8 Asian countries in Bangkok.

Our partnership with ADPC, dating back 25 years, anticipated the need for a Centre dedicated to serve the Asia-Pacific Region. The development rationale that justified our support 25 years ago is even more valid today. Looking ahead, a centre dedicated to training the next generation of disaster risk managers for the Asia-Pacific region will indeed be critical given the frequency and severity of disasters in this region.

As the experience of the last few decades has shown, choices made about development are closely linked to the success of disaster mitigation. Vulnerabilities associated with poverty will continue to increase the impact of disasters, but, by itself, development will not guarantee a reduction in disaster unless risk reduction measures are integrated into development strategies. This is the key policy and behaviour change we need to make to ensure progress is not wiped out in a matter of minutes, as we have seen in many parts of Asia & as we are witnessing in Japan.

In closing, I would again congratulate the ADPC staff and management on their achievements. UNDP looks forward to continued collaboration to promote and build crisis resilience in Asia and the Pacific.