Fifteenth South Asia Economic Summit (SAES XV)

Unleashing an equitable green transformation in South Asia

Kathmandu | 11-13 December 2024

Parallel session: Capacity building on sustainable disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, and mitigation

Date: 12 December 2024 Time: 16:00-17:45

The Asia and the Pacific region is experiencing some of the greatest threats of climate change-induced disasters. Over the past decades, floods, tropical cyclones, heatwaves, droughts, and earthquakes have become more frequent and intense, leading to terrible losses of lives, displacing communities, damaging people's health, and pushing millions into poverty. Immediate collaborative action is required to prevent and respond to disaster risks before climate resilience becomes unfeasible.

Within this region, South and South-West Asia is the subregion with the highest death toll as a share of the population over the past 50 years, accounting for more than 1 million, or 50% of the fatalities. Based on ESCAP's disaster report 2023, the highest population exposure to multiple climate hazards, including droughts, floods, and heatwaves (more than 50% of the population exposed under 1.5°C and 2°C warming scenarios), is in South and South-West Asia. On the other hand, this subregion has the lowest self-reported multi-hazard early warning system coverage.

This calls for urgent action to build disaster resilience in the face of climate change. Some of the main action points are improving disaster risk knowledge, enhancing countries' capacity to monitor and forecast disasters and effective early warnings, and ensuring preparedness and response at national and subnational levels while devising more suitable financial mechanisms.

ESCAP has implemented a two-year Joint SDG Fund project, "Strengthening National and Subnational Capacity for Sustainable Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation in Maldives." This program anchored Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) at the heart of national and subnational development planning to ensure better achievement of SDGs and Agenda 2030 in the Maldives. The project anticipated climate risks in the Maldives for hazards like flood, storms, and sea level rise and their possible impacts on the population and socio-economy of the Maldives based on the high-resolution climate projection information. It also highlighted some potential adaptation strategies for climate hazards and suggestive ways to integrate the outcome with the policies and actions related to DRR and CCA.

This session will present some of ESCAP's efforts toward supporting countries in their disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, and, furthermore, engage a panel of experts in a more in-depth discussion on challenges, opportunities, and ongoing initiatives in these areas. It will disseminate the success story of Maldives to explore if similar national and subnational capacity building is needed by other countries of the South and South-West subregion. The issues and questions for discussion in the session include:

- What are the main challenges in disaster risk resilience South Asian countries?
- What are some of the successful initiatives towards building resilience in the region?
- What kind of collaboration and partnership can help South Asia towards DRR (with examples)? What are the main challenges in the way and where are the opportunities?
- How are data utilized in the region in building disaster risk resilience (with examples)? Where are the data gaps that need to be addressed?