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## **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)**

**"Co-ordination of Relief Operations in Case of Natural Disasters - with  
Special Regard to Strengthening the Co-operation with the EU"**

## **Distinguished Delegates,**

Below you will find a brief introduction to our Committee:

### **Chairperson**

My name is Astrid and I look forward to chairing the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. At the time of the VIMUN 2005, I will have completed my first year at the University of Warwick in England, studying Economics, Politics and International Studies. I participated in the VIMUN 2003. This was such a brilliant experience that I am now coming back to chair a committee. Apart from the VIMUN, I have participated in other Model United Nations, in various countries, and a youth United Nations conference at the UN headquarters in New York. From my degree study and travels you can probably already tell that I feel passionately about issues on development. I also feel conferences like this are extremely beneficial since they help mould the leaders of tomorrow.

### **Co-Chairperson**

My name is Stefan Kubina, I am 21 years old and I was born in Vienna. I am a student of political sciences at the university of Vienna. My special interests are: international relations, international law, the United Nations Organisation and the European Union. Beside my studies I am interested in world literature (Russian literature such as Dostojewski and Tolstoi) and sports. This years VIMUN is my first one and I am really looking forward to this experience.

### **Usher**

My name is Katharina. Born in Salzburg and educated at the Commercial Academy I was working at a lawyer's office before moving to the Netherlands for one year. Currently I am studying political science and international development at the University of Vienna. I am a communicative open person and very involved with my entire environment especially the people I am with. I also like my private space for instance sports, reading and chatting with friends. I like to travel and I am doing this quite often because I love to be with people from other countries to adapt to their cultures and to learn from it. I am attending VIMUN because of getting more insights into the United Nations and current global issues.

UNESCAP's issue this year is highly relevant, especially in the light of current events. The Asian Tsunami on the 26 of December 2004 killed over 200,000 people and death tolls are still rising. In fact one may never know how many people died. Although the reaction of some parts of the world was fantastic, there were problems in the coordination of relief efforts. The aid seemed to be so heavily concentrated in some regions that they in effect received too much of it, whereas some remote regions received next to nothing. Asia and the Pacific are regions that are prone to many and a large variety of natural disasters and hence appropriate coordination of relief efforts can prove to be vital. In particular the committee will focus on how to strengthen the cooperation with the EU, since these countries were some of the largest aid donors as well as sending numerous relief workers and could provided the necessary expertise in the field of coordination of relief efforts.

We really look forward to meeting all of you at the VIMUN 2005! Until then, if you have any questions or any other issues please feel free to email us under [unescap.vimun@afa.at](mailto:unescap.vimun@afa.at)

Best Wishes,

Astrid, Stefan and Katharina

## **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**

### **Summary of the Commission**

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (referred to as UNESCAP in the rest of the document) is a regional branch for the United Nations Secretariat for Asia and the Pacific. Its headquarters are located in Bangkok in Thailand. Annually, ministers from countries in the region covered by UNESCAP meet to discuss issues of an economic and social nature. They then report back to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission the result of this meeting and any progress that has been made. Not only does UNESCAP provide an opportunity for governments to discuss how to tackle economic and social issues, it also strengthens cooperation within the region.

### **Member States**

Following countries are member states in UNESCAP (53 countries)<sup>1</sup>:

Afghanistan\*, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh\*, Bhutan\*, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia\*, China, Fiji, France, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kiribati\*, Korea (Democratic People's Republic of), Korea (the Republic of), Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic (the)\*, Malaysia, Maldives\*, Marshall Islands (the), Micronesia (Federated States of), Mongolia, Myanmar\*, Nauru, Nepal\*, Netherlands (the), New Zealand, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines (the), Russian Federation (the), Samoa\*, Singapore, Solomon Islands\*, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu\*, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the), United States of America (the), Uzbekistan, Vanuatu\*, Viet Nam

Following countries are associate member states in UNESCAP (9 countries):

American Samoa, Cook Islands (the), French Polynesia, Guam, Hong Kong (China), Macao (China), New Caledonia, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands (the)

### **UNESCAP Targets (as defined by the Secretary General)**

1. Promoting economic and social development through regional and sub regional cooperation and integration;
2. Serving as the main economic and social development forum within the United Nations system for the UNESCAP region;
3. Formulating and promoting development assistance activities and projects commensurate with the needs and priorities of the region while acting as an executing agency for relevant operational projects;
4. Providing substantive and secretariat services and documentation for the Commission and its subsidiary bodies;
5. Carrying out studies, research and other activities within the terms of reference of the Commission;
6. Providing advisory services to governments at their request;
7. Developing and executing programmes of technical cooperation;
8. Coordinating UNESCAP activities with those of the major departments/offices of the United Nations at Headquarters and specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations.

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<sup>1</sup> \*Countries defined as least developed by the UN

## **Divisions of UNESCAP (in order to reach targets proposed above)**

### **• Emerging Social Issues**

Focuses specifically on social issues that affect the poor and other disadvantaged groups of people in society. In particular, it examines how factors like high mortality rates, high fertility rates, migration, HIV/AIDS etc. affect certain countries and regions. It also promotes the empowerment of women.

### **• Environment and Sustainable Development**

#### **• Information, Communication and Space Technology**

Promotes development into research in these areas. There is a focus on using resources in Asia and the Pacific in a sustainable way to establish production in this area. It realizes that policies need to be enforced to help promote cross-governmental work in order for countries to fully benefit from research.

#### **• Poverty and Development**

This was set up to strengthen the relation between research and operational activities in poverty reduction. In particular there are two focuses of this division. Firstly, to help UNESCAP members identify areas where poverty reduction is needed and likewise to point out how this can be done. Secondly, it enforces various measures and projects to eradicate poverty, especially in co-ordination with the UN Millennium Development Goals (see <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>).

#### **• Statistics**

Governments often use statistics to examine where help is needed and what progress has been made. Hence, statistics prove to be an integral part in the poverty eradication process. UNESCAP helps set up the necessary equipment or to renew existing ones to improve the process of gathering information needed for these statistics.

#### **• Trade and Investment**

This division believes that the developing countries in Asia and the Pacific would / do benefit greatly from increased trade on a global level. Hence they help implement the necessary institutions to allow more effective trade and investment to take place.

#### **• Transport and Tourism**

Working together with governments, the private sector and other stake holders, the transport and tourism division helps to explore the benefits of globalisation in three distinct areas:

1. Transport Infrastructure 2. Transport Facilitation and 3. Transport and Tourism Policies.

#### **• Administrative Services**

This division's sole purpose is to facilitate the administrative work of the other sectors in UNESCAP. It is split into distinct divisions. 1. Conference Services, 2. General Services and Security, 3. Financial Services, 4. Human Resource Management and 5. Electronic Services.

#### **• Programme Management**

Responsible for overall programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation at UNESCAP, this division also busies itself with coordinating UNESCAP projects throughout a range of economic and social areas. It is basically designed for people interested in the overall strategic planning and work priorities of UNESCAP.

## **Introduction to the Issue**

Due to the positioning of Asia and the Pacific, they are particularly prone to natural disasters throughout the year. Over the past decades this has caused vast damage to human life and property and is one of the reasons for the curbed development in certain regions. Vulnerability arises due to inadequate hazard prevention schemes as well as socio-economic constraints. However, in the light of the Asian tsunami on the 26<sup>th</sup> December 2004, which shocked the world, increased efforts are being made to improve infrastructure and knowledge in order to prevent such devastating consequences of a natural disaster in the future.

After the Asian tsunami, the EU, more specifically EU member nations, were some of the largest donors of aid both in terms of monetary as well as relief work. They have also committed themselves to help and provide necessary measures to implement an early warning scheme for earthquakes, like the one that exists in the Pacific Ocean.

Coordination of relief work is extremely important. Again taking the example of the tsunami, there was a massive influx of aid and relief work from around the globe. Therefore, high levels of coordination were needed firstly due to the extensiveness of the disaster and secondly since relief work came from many different sources. Poor coordination could mean that some areas hit by the disaster would not receive aid or relief work whilst other areas have an over concentration of aid. In fact, this was the case after the tsunami as some small fishing villages were not discovered until days after the disaster and Thailand's prime minister had to actually stop aid coming into Thailand and rather divert it to countries like India, which needed it more.

Although the prevention of natural disasters is extremely important, it is going to be a long and drawn out process and another natural disaster on the same scale as the tsunami, or worse, could hit tomorrow. Thus it is important to come up with an appropriate method for the coordination of relief operations in the event of a natural disaster.

## **Impact of Natural Disasters in Asia and the Pacific**

### **1. Monsoon Rains**

Asia experiences monsoon rain annually, leading to flooding, and this has devastating effects since a large proportion of India's population live around rivers like the Ganges. This is shown, for example, in a case study of the flooding in 2002 where the Southern Parts of Asia, India and Nepal experienced heavy monsoon rain.

After months of heavy rain, the rivers flooded, causing approximately 9004 deaths, and trapping and displacing about 25 million inhabitants of these countries. Some of the deaths were caused by the sicknesses carried by the waters, such as typhoid or diarrhoea. Whole villages were washed away by the floods, and their inhabitants lost all their belongings. The rivers, such as the Brahmaputra, which has its origins in China, are usually the source of income for the people who live along it. Some taxi people in boats, whereas others fish or grow their vegetables on the fertile soil. However, the floods caused many to lose not only their source of income, but their source of food as well.

Trees were uprooted and plants were destroyed. This caused many landslides, which in turn caused more destruction to the land and more deaths. In Bhopal, India, a 125-year-old dam was not able to withstand the pressure of the surging waters, and broke. The dam supplied about 10,000 hectares of land with water, and so its destruction affected more than a dozen villages. Animals and dead bodies were washed away by the water, causing it to carry various diseases (some of them were mentioned above).

In the village Cherrapunji in India, there is the highest recorded average rainfall, with about 1150cm a year, and most of it is during the monsoon time. The problem is, the governments of India, Nepal and Bangladesh do not have enough money to spend on building the necessary dams to hold back the water, therefore in most years, floods wash away the villages situated along these rivers. In India some of the displaced villagers were put into one of the 13 relief camps, which were set up by the local authorities, and were given food. However, since the government cannot pay them any money for the damage done to their homes, they are going to have to start a new life on their own.

This is the major problem: although these places are hit by natural disasters relatively frequently, they do not receive enough aid to rebuild their homes to withstand the next disaster, since many of the inhabitants are living on subsistence level.

### **2. Earthquakes**

Many areas in Asia and the Pacific are prone to earthquakes. In particular Japan, since it lies on the fault where the Pacific plate is being subducted beneath the Eurasian plate. This results in Japan experiencing over 5000 tremors per year. The devastating earthquake, measuring 7.2 on the Richter scale, that hit Kobe in January 1995, caused over 6500 deaths and about 27,000 people were injured. The buildings that were most heavily damaged, were the ones built before 1981 since these were not subject to the strict building codes that were implemented after this year. However, due to the frequency of earthquakes, Japan has also pursued other measures of protection in order to prevent another catastrophic event, like the Kobe earthquake. (see *Other Issues and Conclusions that have been reached on Natural Disasters*).

### 3. Bush Fires

Although bush fires occur frequently in Australia, they still cause astronomical damage to the environment (which is usually permanent), businesses and the population. For example, a bush fire in Canberra in 2003 caused massive destruction and four deaths. However, due to appropriate warning systems and large-scale evacuation, the damage was not more extensive.

### 4. Drought

During El Niño years Pacific regions, such as Australia and Papua New Guinea, experience draughts. For example, during the last El Niño, Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation reported that draughts in Papua New Guinea caused widespread hunger and there were water shortages on the island of Java.

One particularly harsh draught occurred in Australia over a period of four years from 1979 to 1983, when various regions, especially the southeast, experienced long periods of extremely low rainfall. Although there has never been an accurate calculation of how much damage was done, it is estimated that it amounted to around \$7 billion, due to losses in agriculture, livestock and jobs in rural areas.

### 5. Tropical Cyclones

Many countries in Asia and the Pacific are often affected by tropical cyclones due to their location. The areas within a country that are influenced the worst, are the low-lying coastal regions since this is where the cyclone hits land.

This was the case on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October 1999 when a so-called "super cyclone" (due to the lethal combination of high winds and a strong tidal surge) hit the coast of India. The first winds measured were up to 217 km/h. It killed up to 10,000 people and left an estimated 1.5 million homeless and hence became one of the worst cyclones to hit India. Contaminated corpses and inappropriate relief work meant that a large number of deaths were due to starvation and water-borne diseases. Reconstruction in Orissa, the region worst affected, was still going on years later due to lack of funds and aid.

### 6. Tsunamis

A tsunami was not perceived as a potential hazard until the 26 of December 2004, when the fourth largest earthquake since 1900 (magnitude 9.0 on the Richter Scale), occurred off the coast of South East Asia. This generated a 30metre high tsunami, which affected the coasts of Indonesia, Sri-Lanka, South India and Thailand, in particular. However, the effects of the tsunami were felt as far away as Africa (e.g. Somalia). Still today (February) approximately 500 dead bodies are being found per day and hence there is no final death count. However, estimates are that death tolls will rise far over 300,000. A large number of those affected were tourists taking a holiday in the above named regions. Hence, areas like Europe, were directly influenced by the tragedy. Although the short-term effects were devastating, long-term consequences will be just as bad and maybe even worse. The areas affected relied on tourism for their economy and it will take time to rebuild the infrastructure as well as the fact that tourists need to regain their trust in the region. However, much of the devastation could have been prevented if there had been an early warning system, such as the one that exists in the Pacific Ocean.

### **What UNESCAP has done so far for natural disaster reduction (up until the year 2002)**

Since Asia is a region frequently affected by floods (see reasons above), UNESCAP has implemented various measures for flood prevention. 1949 a Bureau for Flood Control Protection was established in order to advise and assist governments in member countries in flood control and other problems concerning rivers. This sector was later renamed into the Water and Resource Sector. The year 1999 not only marked the 50th year of the UNESCAP's efforts in natural disaster reduction, it was also the final year of the International Decade for Disaster Reduction and the start of the year for International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. At the end of the 20th century and during the 21st century, various meetings were set up to discuss the issue of flood prevention. A selection includes:

•"IDNR-ESCAP meeting for Regional Meeting for Asia: Risk Reduction and Society in the 21st Century," from the 23 to 26 February 1999 (see link for working paper in the bibliography).

•“The Workshop on Regional Cooperation in Flood Control and Management for Improvement of the Urban Environment in Asia and the Pacific,” from 26 to 30 October 1998 (see link in bibliography).

One of the major concepts promoted by UNESCAP is the “Geology for Planning Programme”, which aids government in promoting effective land use. Often natural disasters, such as earthquakes, floods or hurricanes, have worse impacts since the areas they affect are subject to terrible land management. This is especially the case in low lying coastal areas, which are usually the worst affected by natural disasters. It is estimated that there are approximately 1.7 billion people living in coastal areas in Asia and the Pacific. This programme promotes the use of geological data by governments to forewarn and thus help prevent damage done.

The other major area that UNESCAP engages in, is strengthening Regional Cooperation. For example, promoting work in committees like the Typhoon Committee, the Panel on Tropical Cyclones or the Mekong River Commission.

### **Other Issues and Conclusions that have been reached on Natural Disaster Prevention**

- The World Bank Group met from 26 to 28 October 2004 in Istanbul, Turkey, to discuss methods of managing natural disasters in the Eastern European and Central Asian Area (ECA), especially focusing on saving lives and property through hazard risk management.

- The Yangtze River is a major route of transportation in China, connecting the coast to the inner regions. It is also used by many inhabitants for living and farming, and it is further helping the tourist industry to develop in China, for instance by river cruises through the Three Gorges area. However, the river was extremely prone to flooding, the last major one being in 1998. Since then there has been extensive work to prevent such events from reoccurring. In June 2003 further work on the Three Gorges Dam, the largest comprehensive irrigation scheme in the world, was undertaken in order to prevent people and property incurring damages from floods.

- In Japan, there have been various measures implemented to lessen the effects of earthquakes. Examples include: Citizens undergo regular earthquake drills at work and in school; Each city block is provided with small scale emergency fire fighting and medical equipment; Teams of citizens are trained in fire fighting and first aid; Assembly points away from tall buildings are clearly designated; Traffic lights have fail-safe systems and there are emergency power supplies for essential services; Citizens are encouraged to have supplies of food, bottled water, medicines, batteries, torches and a radio at hand. Japanese seismic engineers also have a high reputation for leading the world in the case of an earthquake. As mentioned above, there have been certain laws enforced for building, including regulations for the framework and fire safety.

### **What the EU contributes in the form of prevention of natural disasters and/or aiding victims of natural disasters**

- The EU contributes €4 million to the UN's office for Coordination of Human Affairs disaster preparedness pilot programme. €420,000 of this amount was spent on EU's own pilot 'Global Disaster Alert System,' (GDAS). This system actually picked up the submarine earthquake that generated the devastating Tsunami on Boxing Day. It generated a red alert, which meant that there could potentially be large damage to humans as well as property. However, due to the fact that the system was still in its test stages, it had not yet been developed to suggest emergency plans and/or evacuation procedures. The system is now being completed in order to prevent further disasters.
- The European Community Humanitarian Aid department's 'DIPECHO' (Disaster Preparedness Echo) programme has contributed about €12 million to South East Asian disaster management since 1996, and supports the ASEAN committee on their disaster management programme as well.
- After the Kobe earthquake in 1995, which caused over 6500 casualties, the EU provided €360,000 to the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Summit, which was also held in Kobe in January 2005.
- In the light of the tragic tsunami, which hit South-East Asia on the 26 of December 2004, the EU declared that it would do “all it can” to help set up an early warning system and hence prevent another such disaster from occurring. On the 7 of January, there was an extraordinary meeting of EU

foreign Ministers, where the Council prompted the Commission to come up with an effective plan to strengthen preventative measures, including setting up an early warning system and general disaster preparedness. EU member states have also agreed to promote other ways of assistance, especially in the form of commercial support and bilateral partnerships.

- The EU countries generated a total of about €2 billion to relief in areas affected by the tsunami. As the European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso declared, this aid is aimed at providing relief over a period of years. He also said the Commission would propose that the European Investment Bank would provide long-term concessional loan facilities to those countries affected.

## **Coordination of Relief Efforts**

Although various steps have been taken to prevent natural disasters impacting so greatly on people's lives, they will take time to implement. However, natural disasters behave erratically and there is no way of predicting when the next one will occur. Hence it is extremely important to agree on a framework for coordinating relief efforts in case of future natural disasters.

### **1. A general overview of how relief efforts are coordinated**

When a natural disaster strikes it is usually Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), such as the Red Cross, who stand out. This is because they are the ones usually responsible for immediate aid and help due to the nature of the organisations. Most NGOs are very flexible and hence, when a natural disaster strikes, they are able to provide immediate aid and relief. They usually specialize in specific areas, like Medicine Sans Frontiers (Doctors Without Borders) specializes in providing health care. However, NGOs can usually provide aid only for a limited amount of time since they rely on funding. People will usually donate money when the natural disaster strikes and they can see the short term devastating effects. Yet when the media starts losing interest, since it is not a current topic anymore, people start losing interests as well and thus donations start waning.

Therefore, although NGOs do play a very important role, especially in the initial relief efforts, the ultimate responsibility for dealing with a natural disaster lies with the respective national government. Within the government the job of dealing with the relief efforts are then delegated to specific ministries. For example, in time of a drought, which will probably have the greatest effect on agriculture, the Agricultural Ministry will then be responsible for coordinating the relief programme.

The organisation of preventative measures may be situated within a particular government branch, like the earthquakes building and housing legislations are passed in government. However, the majority of the measures to prevent the impact of natural disasters have to be taken to an international level since they do not only affect one country. The international level is made up of agencies such as the UN, which delegates the coordination of such projects to specific branches like UNESCAP, or the EU. The more countries are involved in negotiations, the more difficult it becomes to settle agreements between them and hence there was no early warning system in the Indian Ocean to forewarn the consequences of the submarine earthquake that generated the tsunami.

When a natural disaster has occurred, there is usually an emergency committee that is established to coordinate activities. These consist of workers from NGOs, government employees and other people. However, once again specific ministries will be assigned depending on the nature of the natural disaster. For example, in the case of a flood many more public services will be required (e.g. the fire department to help with sandbags or for equipment to pump out water). Or in the case of famine or the threat of epidemics, the department of health will be fundamental. Therefore, the relevant ministry will be employed to provide and coordinate relief efforts. In the case of a natural disaster with long term effects, like the tsunami, a regional agency may be formed which coordinates the initial relief work as well as long term efforts to rebuild the area affected. These agencies will run for a couple of years and then be disbanded when their work is not required anymore.

A part from NGOs, which are involved primarily in the initial relief efforts and governments, who have to remain occupied with relief efforts the whole time, there are also so called development agencies, which may be classified as a type of NGO. Their responsibilities usually lie in rebuilding the affected areas after initial aid has taken place. This is because it conforms to their ideals of development. However, other governments may benefit from the hasty rebuilding of affected areas. Therefore sometimes countries have specified agencies for the assistance of the coordination of relief efforts after natural disasters in other countries. For example, in the US there is an agency called the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance,



which is part of the Agency for International Development.

## 2. The UN and the Coordination of Relief Efforts

The UN is another essential organisation when it comes to the coordination of relief efforts. Within the UN there are different agencies that concern themselves with different aspects of natural disaster prevention and coordination of relief work:

- *Prevention:* United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and United Nations Centre for Housing and Human Settlements (HABITAT) as well as regional agencies such as UNESCAP.

- *Preparedness:* United Nations Disaster Relief Office (UNDRO) in conjunction with the regional representative of the UNDP in each country and the regional agency, in this case UNESCAP.

- *During the disaster:* Usually many UN agencies are involved but the main one is the UNDRO, which sends representatives to the respective regions to coordinate foreign aid, record what aid is needed and what aid has arrived and report back to the UN with suggestions on what aid may be required.

- *Specialised agencies:* The UN has many agencies specialised in specific areas of relief efforts. For example UNICEF specialises itself with helping women and children, the World Food Programme provides assistance during droughts and famine and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees acts when persons are displaced and are not able to return home.

- *After the disaster:* This is where most of the UN's development agencies, like the UNDP or FAO, become very important as well as branches of the UN specific to regions affected, like UNESCAP.

## 3. Other Non-Governmental Organisations (specific focus on the Red Cross)

There are over 1,000 privately funded registered non-governmental organisations around the world. These include: Medicin Sans Frontiers, CARE, Caritas, OXFAM, Christian Aid, Save the Children and, of course, the Red Cross.

The Red Cross' particular focus is on emergency operations. It prepares itself to respond appropriately to all different types of emergencies, including natural disasters. Many countries have their own regional Red Cross branch or chapter and hence they can specify their efforts for particular disasters that may hit that region. The employees of the Red Cross have specific training in the field of emergency relief. Each region usually has a stock of supplies that can be used in the case of emergency. However, since it is a worldwide network, stocks can easily be moved between one Red Cross station and another, most of the time.

The Red Cross was one of the primary relief agencies after the tsunami. It provided aid to various regions and helped in a variety of ways, such as setting up camps for the survivors. More about Red Cross activities can be found on the International Red Cross Website (see bibliography).

## 4. The EU and Coordination of Relief Efforts

- *DIPECHO (European Humanitarian Aid Disaster Preparedness Programme in Central Asia):*

"The Central Asian republics are regularly afflicted by earthquakes, floods, landslides and to a lesser extent drought. It is not a matter of "if" somewhere will be hit by natural disaster, but "when". Between 1991 and 2002 around 2,500 people were killed and 5.5 million affected by natural disasters in this region." (DIPECHO Website).

DIPECHO was established in 1996 in order to aid countries to respond effectively in the event of a natural disaster. These measures include preventative (to reduce the impact), preparatory (to lessen the impact) and responsive measures (to speed up the recovery process after the impact). It is funded by ECHO (European Community for Humanitarian Aid) and held its first Action Plan for Central Asia in 2003, which allocated €3 million to disaster preparedness operations in this region. In 2004 the second plan came into action, which saw a further €2.5 million allocated to reducing the impact of natural disasters. This organisation has been especially effective in Tajikistan and the region surrounding it.

- After the tsunami the EU donated €4 million as a commission and a total of €2 billion was generated

by EU countries. A press statement was released, by the president of the EU at the time, Jan Peter Balkenende, who said "The EU stands ready to assist in every way possible to alleviate the sad plight of the victims." It also activated its Monitoring and Information Centre to help coordinate relief efforts from Brussels.

- Also President Barroso released a statement (see bibliography) to the Commission on the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2005 about coordination of aid for the Asian tsunami. After this, the EU was asked to ensure coordination and assistance to those countries affected by the tsunami. Several measures have already been taken to improve the coordination of aid during disasters as well as to improve the communication between Member States and the Council Secretariat. ECHO was delegated to coordinate the overall humanitarian response. In terms of rebuilding and reconstructing the region, the EU has established a 'virtual network platform' to monitor and record EU and EC members' pledges and financing decisions on reconstructions and rehabilitation of the region. This helps facilitate the overview of what has been done and what still needs to be done in the form of relief work. The network is designed around a group of so called focal point officials, designated from each member countries' international development authority. They are then connected to the main focal point within the commission, who is the Director General of External Relations. The designated officials have to report to him with information regarding "...amounts pledged and, in course, on financing decisions taken for reconstruction in terms of grants and loans, the relevant delivery channel for the assistance, distinctions between 'fresh' and re-programmed finance, timing and designated policy/sectoral areas for assistance."

- The EU recognises that it is extremely important to coordinate relief between all the donor countries. However, the UN usually assumes this role as well as the governments of the countries that are affected, so they can divert funds into appropriate areas where it is required.

### **Cooperation between the EU and Asia – Asia- Europe Meeting (ASEM)**

This summit was set up to strengthen the ties between Europe and Asia since transatlantic economic ties and bonds with the G7 economies are strong, however, the European-Asia bonds have not yet grown to their full potential. The hopeful outcome of these meetings, is that the three main centres of economic activity, namely Europe, Asia and North America, will be able to form stronger connections. The first meeting was held on the 1 to 2 march 1996 in Bangkok following the theme "Towards a New Asia-Europe Partnership for Greater Growth." Twenty-five heads of state from Europe and Asia (Brunei, Darussalam, China, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom as well as the President of the EU) attended this meeting. This was the first of (hopefully) many more meetings. The next meeting is expected to take place in a European country and hopefully involve politicians of a variety of ministries, such as the foreign ministry or the agricultural ministry. To maintain the momentum of the ASEM, the follow-up measures, discussed in the Bangkok meeting need to be pursued and then taken up in the next meeting.

The meeting aimed to get leaders from both continents to get to know each other as well as encourage understanding of the people in both regions. This meeting was to be the foundation of closer relations between the two continents in particular to explore new fields of cooperation in economic, social and political areas.

#### **Aims in political areas:**

To look at global and regional issues and find areas of mutual interest. Pressing global issues include the United Nations and the reformation of it as well as general disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. Discussion on political issues should generate trust between countries and thus enhance general global stability.

#### **Aims in economic areas:**

To strengthen economic ties, and to promote investment and foster trade in and between both regions. These come in conjunction to the structure of trade liberalisation suggested by the World Trade Organisation. Small-Medium businesses will receive special focus as well strengthening ties between private and business sectors in both regions. With this meeting, leaders hope to achieve this by joint venture, increased contact and transfer of technologies.

#### **Aims in social areas:**

Promote general development as well as the development of human resources, eliminate general cultural misconceptions between both sides, more comprehensive exchange programmes between academic institutions to encourage people-to-people contacts and the promotion of sustainable development.

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[www.unescap.org](http://www.unescap.org)

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<http://europa.eu.int/>

The International Red Cross:

<http://www.icrc.org/>

ECHO:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/echo/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/echo/index_en.htm)

ASEM:

<http://asem.inter.net.th/asem-info/background.html>

### **Case Studies**

South Asia Monsoon: (case study)

<http://www.waterconserve.info/articles/reader.asp?linkid=34031>

Bangladesh Floods in 1991: (case study)

<http://www.fantasyfacup.com/matthew/essays/bang91.htm>

Yangtze River in China: (case study):

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chang\\_Jiang](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chang_Jiang)

Australian Natural Disasters: (case studies)

<http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/naturaldisasters/>

India Super-Cyclone in 1999: (case study)

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/october/29/newsid\\_3691000/3691573.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/october/29/newsid_3691000/3691573.stm)

South-East Asian Tsunami 2004: (case study)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2004\\_Indian\\_Ocean\\_earthquake](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2004_Indian_Ocean_earthquake)

### **Managing Natural Disasters**

UNESCAP and Natural Disasters:

[http://www.unescap.org/enrd/water\\_mineral/disaster/disaster.htm](http://www.unescap.org/enrd/water_mineral/disaster/disaster.htm)

(includes working papers for: "IDNR-ESCAP meeting for Regional Meeting for Asia: Risk Reduction and Society in the 21st Century" and "The Workshop on Regional Corporation in Flood Control and Management for Improvement of the Urban Environment in Asia and the Pacific.")

Managing Natural Disasters in Eastern Europe and Central Asia:

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/ECAEXT/0,,contentMDK:20271975~pagePK:146736~piPK:146830~theSitePK:258599,00.html>

Natural Disaster Reduction in South Asia:

<http://www.undp.org/surf-kathmandu/thematic/k-maps/mapndrsa/fulldocument.html#v>

EU Role in Asian Tsunami Warning System:

<http://www.eupolitix.com/EN/News/200501/f6230807-3b82-4361-9f8c-62f547d3bd01.htm>

EU's DIPECHO website:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/echo/field/dipecho/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/echo/field/dipecho/index_en.htm)

European Response to Tsunami:

[http://europa.eu.int/tsunami/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/tsunami/index_en.htm)

<http://www.eubusiness.com/afp/050106094440.elzno314>

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/news/barroso/sp05\\_57.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/news/barroso/sp05_57.htm)

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/tsunami/aid\\_coordination.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/tsunami/aid_coordination.htm)

General Information on Disaster Management:

<http://dmc.engr.wisc.edu/courses/aimscope/AA02-03.html>

DIPECHO in Central Asia:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/echo/field/dipecho/central\\_asia\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/echo/field/dipecho/central_asia_en.htm)