

Thematic Session at the 3rd Asia-Pacific Water Summit (3rd APWS)

Water and Disasters in the Context of Climate Change - From the Mountains to the Islands -

Concept Note

1. Objective and expected outcome of the session

Asia-Pacific countries are closely related through water and its many phenomena. Water supports Asia-Pacific lives and livelihoods, aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, and the economic benefits of agriculture, fisheries, industry, transportation and commerce. The interaction of water through atmosphere, land and ocean nurtures and enriches society and culture, and supports our region's continuing development.

Water also brings hazards, experienced through extreme events such as drought and floods (including tidal surges in the coastal areas and glacial lake outburst floods in the Hindu Kush Himalayas). These hazards are exacerbated by climate change, inflicting increasing human and economic impacts from our mountains through to our coasts and small islands. Climate change impacts are compounded by the effect of sea level rise on our region's coastal communities, posing an existential threat to low-lying Pacific Island Countries due to coastal inundation and impacted water resources.

The commonality and inter-connection of our region's water issues opens the opportunities for a holistic approach to be applied, from the region's mountains to its islands. Such an approach is only possible through effective sharing and collaboration on data collection and analysis, knowledge development, policy-making and the application of successful action on the ground.

This session presents a unique platform for high-level leaders of Asia-Pacific States to meet together in an inclusive way to: discuss water-related disaster and environmental risks intensified by climate change; explore common challenges and their solutions; and collaborate on the development of effective frameworks for action.

It is expected that the session's dialogue will reinforce the regional partnership and promote concrete actions towards three major accords: the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (Sendai Framework) the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (Paris Agreement), and the United Nations International Decade (2018-2028) for Action – Water for Sustainable Development, mainly focusing on water and disasters, and will contribute to the Asia-Pacific Water Summit Yangon Statement.

2. Organizers

- International Centre for Water Hazard and Risk Management under the auspices of UNESCO (ICHARM), Public Works Research Institute
- International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)
- Pacific Community (SPC)
- High-Level Experts and Leaders Panel on Water and Disasters (HELP)

3. Session summary

The Asia-Pacific region is especially vulnerable to water-related disasters, however by collaborating to better understand the geo-meteorological and socio-economic drivers of water-related disaster risks, the region can build an effective platform to reduce risk, mitigate damage and effectively “build back better”.

4. Key words

- Platform on Water and Disasters
- Climate Change
- Hindu-Kush-Himalayan Mountains
- Pacific Island Countries (PICs)
- International Decade (2018-2028) for Action - Water for Sustainable Development

5. Key messages

- (1) We recognize that frequent and intensified water-related disasters, sea level rise and depletion of water resource associated with climate change are fundamental and common threats to Asia-Pacific countries.
- (2) We need to improve our understanding of the changing society and climate; build integrated assessment capabilities; and create and share usable and actionable information for policy-making and community of practice.
- (3) We should introduce and implement a holistic, concerted and regionally collaborative approach from the mountains to the islands to reduce water-related disaster and environmental risks intensified by climate change in the Asia-Pacific region.

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