

## PRESS RELEASE

### 2012 ASIAN DISASTER FIGURES<sup>1</sup>

#### **FLOOD DEATHS DOWN BUT ECONOMIC LOSSES SIGNIFICANT**

**DECEMBER 11, BANGKOK** - An early view of disaster trends in 2012 across Asia, the world's most disaster-prone region, shows that mortality from flood events continues to decline but economic losses remain a major cause of concern.

In 2012 so far, floods were the most frequent disaster occurring in Asia (44%) and had the highest human and economic impact. They accounted for 54% of the death toll in Asia, 78% of people affected and 56% of all economic damages in the region.

Pakistan suffered large-scale loss of life from floods for the third successive year as 480 people died in floods between August and October. Floods in China (June-July) affected over 17 million people and caused the highest economic losses (US \$4.8 billion).

Floods and storms remain the main threats in Asia, as seen last week in the Philippines when Typhoon Bopha resulted in 500 deaths but overall, in 2012, fewer people were killed by disasters in Asia compared to previous years, the Louvain University Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) confirmed today in a joint press conference with the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) in Bangkok, Thailand.

In Southern, South-Eastern and Eastern Asia, 83 disasters caused 3,103 deaths, affected a total of 64.5 million people and triggered US\$ 15.1 billion damages in 2012.<sup>2</sup> Globally, these three regions accounted for 57 per cent of the total deaths, 74 per cent of the affected people and 34 per cent of the total economic damages caused by disasters in the first ten months of 2012. Worldwide, 231 disasters caused 5,469 deaths, affected a total of 87 million others, and caused US\$ 44.6 billion economic damages.

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<sup>1</sup> Preliminary data covering the time period January to October 2012

<sup>2</sup> Eastern Asia: China P Rep, Hong Kong (China), Japan, Korea Dem P Rep, Korea Rep, Macau, Mongolia, Taiwan (China). South-Eastern Asia: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao P Dem Rep, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam. Southern Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran Islam Rep, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka.

“Fortunately this year, the regions did not suffer from any major disaster, such as an earthquake. Asian disaster figures are low compared to other years and this is good news,” said Dr. Debby Sapir, Director of CRED.

“The 2012 figures show that floods and storms affected most people and caused most economic damages in the regions. Data also suggest that some high risk countries in the region have made significant progress in controlling disaster impacts. This means that preparedness and prevention measures can be effective,” she said.

Jerry Velasquez, Head of the UNISDR Asia Pacific, said: “The relative reduction in the number of disasters so far this year in the region is not a cause for complacency. We must still contend with the fact that risk is growing faster than wealth is being created. Exposure is on the rise and flooding represents a serious challenge to Asian cities as we have seen earlier this year in Beijing and Manila where these two cities were partly flooded in a couple of hours.

“Flood risk must be addressed in a more systematic manner and integrated in all urban and development management plans if we want to ensure sustainable economic growth and better protect people and their assets as extreme weather events will be more frequent and severe in the future.”

Mr. Velasquez added: “The number of people killed by weather-related disasters continues to decrease in Asia and this confirms the trend that was already observed by the 2011 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction and the last Asian Pacific Disaster Report, but economic losses are going up and we should be worried about it.”

“Unless prevention—including climate action—takes center stage, disasters will likely block development,” said Vinod Thomas, Director General of Independent Evaluation at the Asian Development Bank (ADB) who was also a speaker at the press conference. “Yet for too long we have thought of natural calamities as just periodic interruptions to development but this is not the case anymore, we need to invest more in preventive actions before disasters strike,” he said. ADB’s *Response to Natural Disasters and Disaster Risks* which was recently released also signalled the increase of floods and storms in the region and the need for more action.

### **Background notes** **DECADE 2001-2011**

In the last decade, 36% of worldwide reported disasters occurred in Asia. But the three regions accounted for 62% of the global disaster mortality, 89% of the globally reported number of total affected people, and 47% of global economic damages from disasters.

In Asia, an annual average of 136 disasters were reported during the last decade, as well as 66,000 deaths, 219.9 million people affected and US\$ 67.8 billion economic damages.

People were mostly affected by floods (50%) and droughts (26%), mainly in China and India.

The 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami in Japan was the most expensive disaster ever registered (US\$ 214 billion).

In the last decade, most disaster deaths in the region were caused by earthquakes (68%) such as in 2011 with the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami in Japan, the 2008 Sichuan earthquake in China, the

2005 Kashmir earthquake in Pakistan, the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami and the 2003 Bam earthquake in Iran. Economic losses were also mainly due to this disaster type.

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