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UN-managed Asian tsunami trust fund broadened to cover disaster preparedness



ESCAP Executive Secretary Noeleen Heyzer

7 March 2011 – The head of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific ([ESCAP](#)) and Thailand’s foreign minister today signed an agreement expanding the scope of the regional tsunami trust fund to include support for disaster preparedness projects.

“The Tsunami Regional Trust Fund has served its purpose well, especially with the establishment of a regional early warning service,” [said](#) Noeleen Heyzer, ESCAP’s Executive Secretary, during the signing of the agreement with Kasit Piromya, Thailand’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the Commission’s headquarters in Bangkok.

“It is now time to step forward in expanding this fund to target disaster preparedness to counter all coastal disasters threatening our communities,” said Ms. Heyzer.

Mr. Piromya noted that “Thailand’s contribution to the fund is part of our comprehensive efforts to enhance regional and international disaster management.”

One major result of the fund was the establishment of the Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia (RIMES), which provides early warning services to 26 members for tsunamis and extreme weather events.

The fund was established in 2005, with generous support from Thailand and Sweden, following the devastating Indian Ocean tsunami of 26 December 2004 which killed at least 200,000 people.

Contributions to the fund have also been received from the Governments of Turkey, Bangladesh, Nepal and the Netherlands.

Since 2005, the fund has supported projects resulting in improved risk knowledge, monitoring and warning services, communication and community preparedness.

ESCAP, Thailand and Sweden recently agreed to expand the core areas of support of the fund to include climate and disaster preparedness in the light of the increased number of extreme weather events, as well as the to strengthen early warning systems, changing its name to the ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries.

Sweden, a significant donor to the fund, strongly supported transforming its work. “Sweden welcomes the decision to broaden the scope of the fund to include overall disaster and climate preparedness,” said Lennart Linner, Sweden’s ambassador to Thailand. “We look forward to continued fruitful cooperation with the partners of the new ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund.”

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