Asia Pacific Science Technology and Academia Advisory Group (AP-STAAG): Championing S&T for disaster risk reduction in the aftermath of COVID-19 to ensure long-term resilience

The Asia Pacific Science Technology and Academia Advisory Group (AP-STAAG) is an active network of the S&T community in the region, advancing appropriate scientific and technical applications to support decision-making for disaster risk reduction. Under the aegis of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Government of Malaysia, AP-STAAG and key partners convened the virtual 2020 Asia-Pacific Science and Technology Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction on 15 October 2020. The Conference saw the launch of the Status of S&T in Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia Pacific[1] and the Asia Pacific Framework for NATECH (Natural Hazards Triggering Technological Disasters) Risk Management[2], two key products of AP-STAAG in 2020. The climax was the Kuala Lumpur Consensus on S&T for Disaster Risk Reduction[3], which documents the commitment of about 200 researchers, academics and other stakeholders from across the Asia-Pacific, who participated in the Conference, to provide evidence-based research to inform the recovery process in the context and aftermath of COVID-19 to ensure long-term resilience.

The Kuala Lumpur Consensus draws on the progress in S&T for disaster risk reduction in the Asia Pacific and takes due consideration from the Sendai Framework to "build back better" in this window of opportunity, as the region moves to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. In Understanding Disaster Risk, the priority is to strengthen data sharing and knowledge management to better understand emerging climate risks, including exposure and vulnerability, public health threats, and risks of transboundary, cascading, biological, technological, environmental and NATECH disasters, through a multi-hazard approach. For Disaster Risk Governance, the priority is to enhance transdisciplinary engagement, between scientists, policy-makers, civil society and businesses at all levels, to strengthen science-based decision making, consider future risk, and promote local and traditional knowledge, including land-based solutions. To Invest in DRR for Resilience, the priority is to increase investment in knowledge, education, research, innovation, technology transfers and the empowerment of youths and young professionals, to advance multi-disciplinary disaster risk reduction and build resilience. To Enhance Disaster Preparedness for Effective Response and to Build Back Better, the priority is to develop and disseminate information on multi-disciplinary science, technology and innovations for effective pre-disaster planning, preparedness, response and to build back better in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction. To accelerate these actions and facilitate transformation, cooperation is required on:

1. Strengthening transdisciplinary action-oriented research and education, and engagement in disaster risk science, technology and policy;
2. Enhancing the inclusion of science and technology groups, including youths and young professionals, and stakeholder groups in DRR activities and policy platforms;
3. Increasing investment from governments, societies, businesses and other stakeholders in research, capacity building and development of DRR science and technology;
4. Increasing support to governments, societies, businesses and other stakeholders around innovation, partnership development, international cooperation and exchanges on science and technology-based DRR.

[1] https://www.undrr.org/publication/status-science-and-technology-disaster-risk-reduction-asia-pacific-2020

[2] https://www.undrr.org/publication/asia-pacific-regional-framework-natech-natural-hazards-triggering-technological

[3] http://apstaag.bnu.edu.cn/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/KL_ConsensusSTforDRRFinal-11.pdf