UN NEWS CENTRE UN News service
With breaking stories and newswire products from

# UN examines how to use technology to minimize disaster damage in Asia-Pacific

11 August 2009 – Better utilizing information and communication technology (ICT) to prepare for and deal with catastrophic natural disasters in the Asia-Pacific region is the focus of a United Nations meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, today.

The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and last year's Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar have caused massive human and economic losses, partly due to inadequate national warning and response mechanisms, as well as the inability to address underlying risks, according to the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (**ESCAP**).

In 2008, nearly 250,000 people died as a result of natural disasters in the Asia-Pacific, representing 97 per cent of fatalities worldwide.

With climate change increasing both the frequency and severity of disasters, setting up disaster resilience strategies is an urgent matter, said Hyeun-Suk Rhee, Director of the UN Asian and Pacific Training Centre for ICT for Development (APCICT), which organized today's session.

ICT spans radio, television and other traditional media, as well as new media and space-based technologies including satellite communications.

It can "play a major role in disaster management, from mapping risks, developing early warning systems, raising awareness to preparing communities for disasters," Ms. Rhee **said**. "ICT is also indispensable in response and recovery operations."

The APCICT gathering is bringing together experts to discuss gaps in disaster management and how to boost the use of ICT in response, recovery and risk reduction efforts.

Today's meeting is part of the three-day International Conference on Building a Local Government Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction, set up by the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) and the Incheon Metropolitan City of the Republic of Korea.