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PRESS RELEASE

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ASEAN countries committed legally to reduce disaster risks in South East Asia

After five years of negotiations, Southeast Asian countries have cleared the last requirement that will turn the Hyogo Framework for Action - a ten year action plan to reduce disaster losses by 2015 - into a binding agreement.

On 14 September, the Philippines cleared for ratification the ASEAN Agreement for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER). The country was the last of the ten Southeast Asian Nations to approve legally the agreement since it was signed by ASEAN Foreign Ministers in July 2005 just a few months after the tsunami struck in the Indian Ocean.

“For the first time, ten nations are legally bound together to improve the resilience of millions of people who are increasingly vulnerable to disasters due to climate change impacts and rapid urbanization. Political will is decisive to reduce disaster risks and The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) is the proof of it. The agreement is a leading framework that will enhance regional cooperation and nations’ capacities in this fast growing part of the world” said Margareta Wahlström, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction.

South East Asia is one of the most disaster affected regions in the world and also among the most populated in the world, with a population of more than 500 million people. Floods and cyclones are recurrent events that affect millions of people every year. The 2008 Cyclone Nargis killed more than 130 000 people in Myanmar.

The ASEAN Agreement for Disaster Management and Emergency Response will intensify the collaboration between nations in early warning, prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response and rehabilitation. It will also increase the technical cooperation among Member States and establish an ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre).

“I would like to thank all ASEAN Member States for their determination in ratifying the Agreement. This marks a significant milestone in ASEAN’s collective efforts to build a disaster-resilient community by the year 2015” said Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, the Secretary-General of ASEAN.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations is composed of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam.