

# STUDY GUIDE

UNESCAP



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Letter From the Secretary-General .....  | <b>3</b>  |
| Letter From the Under Secretary-General .....  | <b>4</b>  |
| Introduction to ESCAP .....  | <b>5</b>  |
| Agenda Item I: Developing Regional Strategies for Disaster Preparedness and Response ..... | <b>7</b>  |
| Topic Background .....   | 7         |
| Natural Disaster Risk Assessment .....   | 8         |
| Early Warning Systems .....  | 9         |
| The Significance of Early Warning Systems in Asia and the Pacific .....                    | 10        |
| ESCAP's Initiatives in Promoting EWS .....   | 11        |
| Technology and Innovation in Disaster Response .....                                       | 11        |
| The Role of Technology in Disaster Response .....  | 11        |
| Innovation for Resilience .....  | 13        |
| Policy and Governance for Disaster Management .....  | 14        |
| Policy Development.....  | 14        |
| Governance and Capacity Building.....  | 14        |
| Regional Cooperation .....   | 15        |
| Advocacy and Partnerships .....  | 15        |
| Agenda Item II: Censorship of Media in Asia and the Pacific.....                           | <b>16</b> |
| Topic Background .....   | 16        |
| History of Media Censorship .....  | 17        |
| Chronology of Media Censorship .....   | 18        |
| Legal Frameworks and Regulations .....   | 20        |
| Freedom of Speech and Expression .....   | 21        |
| Public Perception and Awareness .....  | 23        |
| Major Countries Affected .....   | 24        |
| Questions to Addressed.....  | <b>25</b> |
| Bibliography.....  | <b>26</b> |

# 1. Letter from the Secretary General

Dear Participants,

It is I, Recep Eren Durgut, a senior student at Bogazici University Industrial Engineering Department. As the Secretary-General, I would like to welcome you all to the 6th official session of BoğaziçiMUN. For February, our academic and organizational team have been working for almost a year now. I would like to thank Deputy Secretaries-General Kaan Akkas and Kaan Oztoprak for their efforts in the journey. And a big appreciation to Oyku Efendi and Kaan Berker for their efforts and cooperation during the process.

From the point the journey of BoğaziçiMUN started, it's been years of hard work and sacrifices to achieve the best conference to satisfy your demands and needs. Years of tears, generations, and conflicts have now grown up for the year 2024. By the experience we had gained from the previous versions every year, our capabilities have become the finest version of the BogaziciMUN history. Every year, you, our participants develop a better global perspective, a better understanding of politics, and a sweet and sometimes bitter taste of global interactions. The year 2024 will welcome us with new agendas for future discussions and negotiations. As the Secretary General of BoğaziçiMUN, you have my full trust and support to address these agendas. BogaziciMUN is a place where you can find love, lifelong friendships, and chosen siblings. Months of hard work are just for you to be able to experience the best and find the ones that can change your life. BoğaziçiMUN has been 'Bridging the Gap' for years and with the new version of it, the gap, and the way we bridge will be different and unique.

In every story, there has always been a point where the heroes have to say goodbye. I would like to thank the heroes of the BoğaziçiMUN who are retired, but their legacy and vision will always be remembered.

Last but not least,

Welcome to the BoğaziçiMUN'24, where we are "Bridging the Gap".

Recep Eren Durgut  
Secretary-General of Boğaziçi MUN 2024

# Letter from the Under-Secretary General

Dear Esteemed Delegates,

It is with great pleasure and anticipation that I extend a warm welcome to each and every one of you to the BOĞAZIÇİMUN'24. I'm İlğim Mina ABAT, a 4th-year Visual Communication Design student at Bahçeşehir University. I will be serving you as the Under-Secretary General of ESCAP. I am thrilled to be a part of such a talented group of academicians, and I sincerely thank the academic team of BOĞAZIÇİMUN'24 for bringing us together.

BOĞAZIÇİMUN'24 is not merely an academic exercise but an opportunity for each delegate to engage in thoughtful debate, collaboration, and problem-solving. Your presence here is a testament to your dedication to fostering international understanding and finding innovative solutions to the complex challenges our world faces.

Within this study guide, you will find comprehensive information about the committee, and topics that will guide our discussions throughout the conference. It is essential that you familiarize yourself with the content provided, as it will serve as the foundation for our deliberations.

As Chair Board members, we are here to support and guide you throughout the conference. Feel free to approach us with any questions or concerns you may have. Our goal is to ensure that this experience is not only intellectually stimulating but also personally enriching.

We believe that each delegate brings a unique perspective and set of skills to the table. By working together, we can create an environment that fosters creativity, understanding, and the exchange of ideas.

We look forward to witnessing the thoughtful debates and diplomatic negotiations that will unfold over the course of the conference. If you have any questions or hesitations about the study guide provided by us, please do not hesitate to contact me via the e-mail address below. [ilgimmina.abat@bahcesehir.edu.tr](mailto:ilgimmina.abat@bahcesehir.edu.tr)

Best regards,

**İlğim M. ABAT**

**President Board Member**

# Introduction to ESCAP

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific was founded in 1947 with ten members; Australia, China, France, India, the Netherlands, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. Since its founding, the Economic and Social Commission membership has grown to 53 members and 9 associate members.

The main objective of ESCAP is to promote regional cooperation and integration of sustainable development and growth. ESCAP's work span consists of a wide range of areas.

These areas of key functions include:



1. **Macroeconomic Policy, Poverty Reduction, and Financing for Development:** ESCAP plays a significant role in member countries implementing effective policies supporting economic growth and encouraging productive employment. ESCAP conducts research and produces publications to support regional cooperation.
2. **Trade, Investment, and Innovation:** Trade and Investment through global participation results in creating employment, raising incomes, and helping spread technology in the region. However, not all communities can benefit from growth that comes

from international markets. With the implementation of technology, innovations can reduce inequality and support sustainable development.

### **3. Transport:**

Currently, the development of a region is dependent on transportation; whether it is based on the transportation of people, agricultural products, or necessities. As stated by the ESCAP secretariat “...*countries that have been able to improve transport capacities and efficiency have been the most successful in achieving sustainable development*”. During the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Transport in 2021, the Transport Research and Education Network (TREN) was launched to support member states in fulfilling their commitments to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

### **4. Environment and Development:**

Progress on the environment-related SDGs and crises in food, energy, and finance highlighted the socio-economic and environmental vulnerability of the Asia and the Pacific region. Corresponding with the 2030 Agenda's goal and Environment and Development Division (EDD), member states need to identify & gather speed with their actions.

### **5. Information Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction:**

Despite the progress of regional connectivity through information and communication technologies, Asia and the Pacific is the most digitally divided region in the world. As A Result of this gap, millions of people can not access digital opportunities in education, health, and finance. Efforts of ESCAP are focused on strengthening regional internet availability and affordability.

As Asia and the Pacific are the most disaster-prone regions, the member states must invest in effective disaster risk reduction measures. Records around the world have proven that disaster prevention and preparedness can be far more effective and less costly than ever before.

## **6. Social Development:**

The Social Development Division (SDD) promotes social protection, gender equality, and social inclusion among all. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development “Leave no-one behind” provides international and regional cooperation frameworks.

## **7. Statistics:**

ESCAP works to improve the quality of statistics being used in decision-making progress. Relevant, timely, and high-quality statistics are key to providing policy decision-makers with the information needed through decision-making progress.

## **8. Energy:**

The Committee of Energy focuses on ensuring access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy for the region aligning with SDG7.

# **AGENDA ITEM I: Developing Regional Strategies for Disaster Preparedness and Response**

## **Topic Background**

Natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, typhoons, floods, and droughts are common in the Asia-Pacific area. These disasters are becoming more frequent and intense, endangering lives, livelihoods, and sustainable development of the region. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), which recognizes the urgent need for coordinated action, is essential in assisting in the creation and execution of regional plans for disaster prevention and response.

The geography, culture, and social diversity of the Asia-Pacific area is what makes it unique. Because of this variability, disaster response and preparation face particular difficulties. The ability of the nations in the region to foresee, lessen, and

recover from disasters varies greatly. Some countries struggle because of insufficient funding and institutional capacity, while others benefit from sophisticated early warning systems and strong infrastructure. ESCAP is aware that resolving these differences calls for a comprehensive and inclusive strategy.

To address the transboundary nature of disasters in Asia and the Pacific, regional cooperation is crucial. Because of their interdependence, the countries in the region are frequently affected by disasters that cross national boundaries. Effective disaster preparedness and response need a concerted effort to exchange knowledge, experience, and resources. Through the exchange of best practices, collaboration among member states, and cooperative actions to fortify regional resilience, ESCAP provides a forum for these activities.

As a regional intergovernmental body, ESCAP is in a good position to support the creation of comprehensive regional plans for disaster response and preparedness. The organization can facilitate communication by giving member states a forum to exchange experiences, difficulties, and lessons learned. Additionally, by utilizing its experience, ESCAP can assist member states create plans that are specifically suited to their requirements and weaknesses.

Promoting the development of standardized regional frameworks that assist member states in establishing efficient disaster management systems is one of ESCAP's main responsibilities. Risk assessment, early warning systems, capacity building, and international cooperation should all be covered by these frameworks. To create regional centers of excellence that function as hubs for training, research, and the sharing of technical expertise about disaster resilience, ESCAP can work with member states.

### **Natural Disaster Risk Assessment**

Natural disasters of many kinds, such as earthquakes, tsunamis, typhoons, floods, droughts, and landslides, are common in Asia and the Pacific area. The region's tectonic plate borders, climate trends, and geographic location all contribute to its vulnerability. ESCAP must focus on disaster risk assessment since high



population densities in coastal areas and quickly urbanizing cities aggravate the danger.

Natural disaster risk assessment is a fundamental step in disaster risk reduction (DRR). Assessing and comprehending the risks, vulnerabilities, and exposure that communities encounter is crucial, according to ESCAP. Data collection, trend analysis, and disaster scenario modeling are all part of this process. Governments, academic institutions, and other stakeholders work with ESCAP to create thorough risk assessments that serve as the foundation for well-informed decision-making.

ESCAP assists its member states in gathering and organizing data about natural catastrophes. This entails setting up mechanisms to keep an eye on geological and meteorological events, keeping databases on past natural disasters, and monitoring variations in the temperature and surrounding environment. ESCAP facilitates the government's ability to identify high-risk areas and spend resources efficiently by giving access to dependable data.

Additionally, the organization supports the creation of early warning systems and risk models. These technologies enable authorities to promptly issue warnings and orders for evacuation by using data and technology to estimate the possibility and severity of disasters. In the event of a natural disaster, ESCAP's activities in this field aid in minimizing damage and casualties.

ESCAP promotes knowledge exchange and capacity building among its member states. ESCAP provides disaster management agencies, government officials, and other stakeholders with enhanced technical skills through training programs, workshops, and regional forums. By sharing best practices across the region, this information exchange promotes a collaborative approach to disaster risk assessment and response.

### **Early Warning Systems**

Early Warning Systems (EWS) are proactive tools that governments can use to inform affected people and take preventive action by monitoring and predicting

imminent disasters. These systems are made up of various essential elements, such as public awareness and readiness, communication routes, data gathering and analysis, and information distribution.

As a regional intergovernmental organization, ESCAP is dedicated to improving resilience, poverty reduction, and sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific area. Within the framework of disaster risk reduction, ESCAP is essential in encouraging and helping to build strong early warning systems. To enhance EWS in the area, the organization collaborates closely with local people, foreign partners, and member states.

### **The Significance of Early Warning Systems in Asia and the Pacific**

**Disaster Risk Reduction:** The Pacific and Asia are extremely vulnerable to many natural calamities. Early warning systems offer a vital lifeline by allowing individuals and authorities to plan, evacuate, and lessen the severity of these disasters. This reduces casualties and minimizes damage to infrastructure and livelihoods.

**Saving Lives:** Numerous lives can be saved by the timely alerts that EWS provides. For instance, in the aftermath of submarine earthquakes in the Pacific Ring of Fire, tsunami warning systems have proven crucial in averting massive casualties.

**Economic Resilience:** Significant financial losses are a common result of disasters. Early warning systems enable governments and corporations to take preventive action, which helps limit these losses. Sustainable development and economic resilience are facilitated by the capacity for efficient planning and response.

**Climate Change Adaptation:** Weather patterns in the Asia-Pacific area are becoming more unpredictable as the effects of climate change worsen. By giving farmers, fishermen, and other vulnerable groups accurate and timely information, EWS can assist communities in adapting to these changes.

## ESCAP's Initiatives in Promoting EWS

**Capacity Building:** The organization helps member governments improve their EWS infrastructure and capacities by providing technical support and capacity-building initiatives.

**Research and Data Sharing:** ESCAP promotes data exchange and the exchange of best practices among member states, as well as research on disaster risk reduction.

**Regional Coordination:** To ensure a coordinated response to transboundary disasters, ESCAP helps member states cooperate and coordinate regionally.

**Public Awareness:** To inform communities about the significance of early warning systems and disaster preparedness, the organization supports public awareness initiatives.

## Technology and Innovation in Disaster Response

There are many different types of countries in the Asia-Pacific area, and their vulnerability to natural disasters varies. Climate change, population increase, and rapid urbanization have made the area more vulnerable to natural disasters. As the UN's regional office, ESCAP has prioritized using innovation and technology to improve disaster response because it understands how urgent it is to address these issues.

### The Role of Technology in Disaster Response

Technology has proven to be a game-changer when it comes to disaster response. Technology may greatly improve preparedness, early warning,

response, and recovery activities, as acknowledged by ESCAP. The following are key areas in which technology is indispensable:

**Early Warning Systems:** Early warning system development and implementation throughout the region have benefited greatly from the support of ESCAP. These systems deliver timely information on approaching disasters through the use of technologies like weather radars, satellites, and data analytics. For instance, the Pacific Disaster Center has created advanced modeling and simulation tools to forecast the effects of disasters and assist governments in organizing their responses.

**Communication and Information Sharing:** During disasters, technology enables excellent communication and information exchange. ESCAP encourages the development of platforms and communication networks that enable governments, responders, and affected communities to share information in real-time. Mobile apps and social media are effective tools for organizing relief operations and distributing alerts.

**Remote Sensing and GIS:** Data from remote sensing technology, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and satellite photos, is useful for disaster management. These tools make it possible to map the affected areas, evaluate the damage, and pinpoint the populations that are most at risk. ESCAP urges members to make investments in their ability to efficiently use data from remote sensing.

**Artificial Intelligence and Big Data:** The potential of big data analytics and artificial intelligence (AI) in disaster response is acknowledged by ESCAP. Large-scale datasets can be analyzed by AI to find patterns, predict disasters, and allocate resources as efficiently as possible. ESCAP encourages the creation of AI-powered solutions to lower the risk of disaster.

## **Innovation for Resilience**

Aside from utilizing current technologies, ESCAP promotes innovation in the Asia-Pacific disaster response. This entails promoting collaborations between the public and commercial sectors, assisting new businesses and entrepreneurs, and boosting research and development. Innovative solutions include:

**Drone Technology:** Drones are becoming more and more common in search and rescue operations, aerial inspections, and the delivery of relief supplies to remote locations. Drone technology usage for disaster response is encouraged by ESCAP.

**Blockchain for Aid Distribution:** By lowering the possibility of corruption and guaranteeing that resources reach those in need as soon as possible, blockchain technology ensures the transparent and accountable distribution of aid.

**3D Printing:** This technology reduces reliance on outside assistance by quickly producing necessities like medical supplies and building materials before, during, and after natural disasters.

**Climate-Resilient Infrastructure:** Using innovative building supplies and methods can make infrastructure more resilient to the effects of natural disasters brought on by climate change.

To promote innovation and technology in disaster response, ESCAP actively collaborates with regional partners, international organizations, and member states. Through programs like the Asian and Pacific Center for the Development of Disaster Information Management (APDIM), ESCAP helps member states in the area with policy support, capacity building, and technical assistance. To enhance disaster risk prevention and response, APDIM focuses on improving data and information management capabilities, including the use of technology and innovation.

## **Policy and Governance for Disaster Management**

Because of their geographic location, tectonic plate movements, and climate patterns, Asia and the Pacific region are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters; additionally, the region's rapid urbanization and population growth have intensified vulnerability to disasters, increasing risks to human lives and economic stability. In this context, ESCAP's role in policy and governance for disaster management is of utmost importance.

### **Policy Development**

In each of its member states, ESCAP actively supports the creation and use of comprehensive disaster management strategies. To help member states create policies that address both disaster preparedness and response, it provides technical expertise and best practices. These regulations involve resilience building, early warning systems, disaster recovery, and risk reduction.

ESCAP assists member states in identifying the opportunities and challenges specific to their disaster management situations by enabling discussions on policies and information exchange. To guarantee long-term resilience, it promotes the implementation of innovative methods, such as incorporating climate change adaptation strategies into plans for disaster risk reduction.

### **Governance and Capacity Building**

For disaster management strategies to be implemented successfully, there must be strong governance frameworks. To improve their governance systems, member states can develop national disaster management agencies and coordinate frameworks with the assistance of ESCAP. It highlights the value of inclusion and makes sure that underrepresented and vulnerable communities are fairly represented in decision-making processes.

Additionally, through the planning of seminars, training courses, and knowledge-sharing forums, ESCAP makes investments in capacity building. Through these

programs, disaster management experts can respond to emergencies and disasters more effectively by improving their technical skills and expertise.

### **Regional Cooperation**

The promotion of regional collaboration in disaster management is one of ESCAP's primary responsibilities. It provides a forum for member governments to work together, exchange data, and plan coordinated responses to cross-border disasters. By encouraging the sharing of best practices and lessons discovered, ESCAP helps states to gain from one another's experiences.

ESCAP has also promoted the creation of regional early warning systems in recent years to address the risk of international disasters like pandemics and tsunamis. These methods lessen the impact of disasters on impacted populations by improving preparedness and facilitating quick responses.

### **Advocacy and Partnerships**

ESCAP promotes integrating resilience-building and disaster risk reduction into more comprehensive development objectives. It works in conjunction with private industry, civil society, and international organizations to gather resources and knowledge for the region's disaster management initiatives.

Furthermore, through its participation in the United Nations' Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and other pertinent international venues, ESCAP actively contributes to the global conversation on disaster risk reduction. This guarantees that in talks about global policy, the unique demands and difficulties of the Asia-Pacific region are taken into consideration.

# AGENDA ITEM II: Censorship of Media in Asia and the Pacific

## Topic Background

The dynamic media environment and rich cultural variety of the Asia-Pacific region are well-known. But along with this diversity, there's a complicated, multidimensional problem: censorship of media. One of the most important organizations in the region for tackling the problems associated with media censorship is the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

In Asia and the Pacific, self-censorship, government control, and social pressure are some of the ways that media censorship takes many different forms. These restrictions limit the free flow of ideas and information, limit press freedom, and violate the right to free expression. This phenomenon is caused by several important factors:

**Authoritarian Governments:** In many countries across the region, authoritarian governments exercise tight control over media outlets. The media landscape is dominated by state-owned companies, and when covering delicate subjects, independent journalists frequently run the risk of violence, harassment, or jail.

**Content Control:** To silence dissident voices and control the narrative, governments use content control tools like censorship boards and stringent laws. Content that is deemed offensive to certain cultures, detrimental to society, or critical of the state is frequently forbidden.

**Self-Censorship:** Many media outlets self-censor, avoiding covering politically touchy or controversial topics to protect themselves from government retaliation. This undermines public trust and stifles investigative journalism.



**Internet Censorship:** As governments employ technology to restrict online information, the digital era has presented new difficulties. Common strategies used to limit the flow of information include internet shutdowns, website blocking, and online activity monitoring.

The censorship of media in Asia and the Pacific has far-reaching implications, both at the national and regional levels:

**Erosion of Democracy:** By preventing citizens from accessing a wide range of information, participating in educated discourse, and holding their governments responsible, media suppression erodes democratic values.

**Stifling of Innovation:** Innovation and creativity are stifled when media freedom is restricted. To encourage entrepreneurship, critical thinking, and societal change, a vibrant media environment is necessary.

**Human Rights Violations:** Media censorship often results in human rights violations, including the suppression of freedom of speech, assembly, and association. Journalists and activists are at heightened risk of persecution.

**Economic Consequences:** Censorship hampers economic development by deterring foreign investment, inhibiting technological advancements, and discouraging entrepreneurship.

### **History of Media Censorship**

The history of media censorship has been an ongoing struggle between the press and governments. The first documented media censorship was implemented by the Roman Catholic Church in 1560. The Index of Forbidden Books was created to list any prohibited written material. These writings were prohibited to control the spread of immoral theological and political materials.

Since then, many governments have established similar laws and acts, the most recent one being the Russian Federation blocking news outlets from coverage of the war in Ukraine.

## Chronology of Media Censorship

**1662** The first written act of media censorship was implemented by King Charles II in England. The Printing Press Licensing Act required government approval for all printed materials.

**1873** The U.S. Congress passed the Comstock Act against the “act criminalized publication, distribution, and possession of information about or devices or medications for unlawful abortion”<sup>1</sup>. Violating the Comstock Act would result in individuals being imprisoned for up to 5 years with a \$ 2,000-dollar of fine.

**1917** U.S. Congress implemented The Espionage Act two months after the United States entered World War I. The act prohibited obtaining and sharing information on opposition ideas. Individuals violating the act would be convicted of treason against the nation. The Act resulted in 74 newspapers being denied privileges.

**1933** The German government, with the help of the “Ministry for Enlightenment of the People and Propaganda” (REPP), legalized the Reich's Theatre Act to ban and promote cultural performances. The law placed theaters under the control of the Minister of REPP. Theaters were expected to perform anti-Semitic views. The Minister could exclude individuals considered politically unreliable in the theater industry.

**1945** During the Cold War period, which lasted from the end of World War II to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, media censorship played a significant role. Western and Eastern blocs present in the Cold War used media censorship to shape and control the narrative. The rivalry between the governments used the media to shape public opinion. The Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries used media to promote Communist ideology and positively present the state. In contrast, the United States of America and its Western Allies managed the media to portray Communism as a threat to freedom and democracy.

**2000** China's Great Firewall refers to online censorship and control implemented by the Chinese government. Access to global news outlets and social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube were prohibited. Search engines and government-approved social media platforms are monitored closely and censored. Usage of Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) is restricted, and prevention measures are taken regularly.

**2010** During the Arab Spring protests, countries where protests took place Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain acted upon media censorship. Various countries implemented internet shutdowns. These shutdowns were done to stop protesters' communication and share information. Governments of Egypt, Tunisia, and Syria shut down traditional media outlets on coverage of protests and convicted journalists reporting on protests. Governments used pro-government media and pluralism to control the perspective.

**2016** After the failed attempt to overthrow Türkiye's government, the government began cleansing various institutions, including the media. Journalists who had opposed ideas were imprisoned on charges of being linked to the riot. Türkiye's government implemented pluralism in opposition-leaning traditional media outlets with takeovers and replacements.

**2021** Myanmar military forces seized control over the Myanmar government in February of 2021. Military authorities imposed periodic internet shutdowns and banned access to social media platforms. Independent media outlets faced restrictions, and opposed journalists were targeted & imprisoned. Military forces took control of state-owned media, resulting in state-owned media reporting with military-aligned narratives. Both traditional and online media were prevented from reporting certain events and perspectives.

## **Legal Framework and Regulations**

A fundamental human right, freedom of expression is protected by several international treaties and agreements. It is essential to the preservation of human dignity, the advancement of different points of view, and the operation of a democratic society. Governments, however, frequently view media censorship as an unavoidable evil to uphold social stability, safeguard national security, and stop the spread of offensive content. Legal systems throughout Asia and the Pacific region reflect the difficult task of striking a balance between censorship and freedom of expression.

**National Legislation:** National Law: Every nation in the Asia-Pacific area has a unique set of laws and rules related to the censoring of media. These rules differ greatly between nations; in South Korea and Japan, for example, they are quite lax, whereas in China and North Korea, they are very harsh. ESCAP urges its member states to harmonize their domestic laws with global norms that uphold the right to free speech while attending to justifiable concerns.

**Online Censorship:** Online censorship has grown in importance as a result of social media and the internet's widespread use. A number of the member states have passed legislation limiting and monitoring internet content. Notable instances are the "Great Firewall" of China and Decree 72 of Vietnam. ESCAP backs initiatives aimed at guaranteeing that internet restriction is implemented in a way that complies with global human rights norms.

**Press Freedom:** Together with nations that impose limitations on media outlets and journalists, the area also comprises nations like Australia and India that have robust press freedoms. Given their vital role in delivering correct information and holding governments responsible, ESCAP promotes the protection of journalists and the growth of independent media.

**Counterterrorism and National Security Laws:** Some member states have justified media control with national security and counterterrorism legislation. These laws have frequently been criticized for having the ability to stifle political

opposition. ESCAP calls on member states to make sure that such laws do not excessively restrict media freedom or freedom of speech.

The importance of free speech in promoting democracy and sustainable development is recognized by ESCAP. It strives to uphold the region's variety and particular difficulties while fostering an atmosphere that is supportive of media freedom. Among ESCAP's efforts in this area are the following:

**Capacity Building:** To assist member states in creating legislative frameworks and regulations that uphold international norms for freedom of expression and media freedom, ESCAP offers training and capacity-building initiatives.

**Regional Cooperation:** To exchange experiences and best practices regarding media regulation and censorship, the commission helps member states work together regionally.

**Research and Advocacy:** To advance knowledge of the obstacles to and prospects for media freedom in the area, ESCAP carries out research and advocacy on media-related topics.

## **Freedom of Speech and Expression**

Asia and the Pacific, a region known for its wide diversity of political systems, languages, and civilizations. This variation is also evident in the media environments, with some nations having thriving, independent media sectors while others struggle greatly with censorship. There are many different elements contributing to media censorship in the region, but they can be essentially divided into three categories: political, cultural, and social.

**Political Factors:** Censorship is a method used by governments in various Asia-Pacific nations to manage information flow and preserve their hold on power. Often, this takes the form of limiting the spread of information that highlights corruption, criticizes the administration, or supports opposition

activities. Content considered a threat to social stability or national security may also be censored by governments, but this is a flimsy and subjective excuse that is frequently employed.

**Cultural Factors:** Media censorship in several societies in the region is heavily influenced by cultural norms and beliefs. Censorship may be applied to content that is considered insulting to cultural or religious sensibilities. These limitations may have their origins in societal norms and conventional wisdom.

**Social Factors:** Media censoring can be influenced by social factors, such as public opinion and ethical considerations. Restrictions may apply to content that is considered immoral or detrimental to the public, especially children and youth. Media organizations and people who fear criticism from their communities may self-censor as a result of social conservatism.

There are still issues in the region despite ESCAP's efforts and international agreements to protect freedom of speech and expression. Some Asian and Pacific nation governments are still tightening their control over the media, which is limiting the variety of viewpoints and suppressing opposition. Furthermore, with the growing prevalence of online censorship and surveillance, the digital era brings additional difficulties.

ESCAP should continue collaborating with member states, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to solve these issues. Not just in urban places but also in isolated and neglected communities, initiatives to advance media literacy and digital independence should be undertaken. Furthermore, to keep up with the changing media landscape and guarantee that freedom of speech and expression is protected rather than curtailed, ESCAP should push for the modernization of laws and regulations.

## **Public Perception and Awareness**

Member states in Asia and the Pacific have diverse approaches to media restriction. While some governments concentrate on policing social media and internet content, others impose stringent controls on traditional media channels like radio, television, and newspapers. Internet blocking, intimidation of journalists, and government-controlled media are a few examples of censorship techniques. Censorship is implemented for a variety of purposes, including maintaining political stability, maintaining national security, preserving cultural traditions, and safeguarding social norms. However, restrictions on the media frequently give rise to worries about infringement of human rights, repression of oppositional voices, and freedom of speech.

In Asia and the Pacific, public perception and awareness play a crucial role in influencing the conversation around media censorship. They affect international cooperation, government policy, and the success of lobbying campaigns. It is easier for legislators and groups like ESCAP to create policies that address the needs and concerns of the public when they have a thorough understanding of the views of the general population.

**Challenges to Public Awareness:** In some countries, public awareness of media censorship may be limited due to strict control over information. It is challenging for citizens to obtain objective information since governments frequently control the state media, silence dissident voices, and influence public opinion. It becomes quite difficult to raise awareness in these kinds of situations.

**Role of Social Media:** Social media has become a potent instrument for influencing public opinion and spreading information. It avoids conventional censorship techniques by enabling people to share their experiences and thoughts. It also highlights the necessity of digital literacy and online safety by exposing users to the possibility of hackers and government spying.

**Civil Society and Activism:** Civil society organizations, human rights activists, and independent media outlets play a crucial role in raising public awareness about media censorship. They often operate in dangerous settings,

putting their safety in danger to reveal censorship and advance freedom of speech.

**International Solidarity:** International solidarity also affects public awareness of media control in Asia and the Pacific. Human rights groups, international media organizations, and foreign governments can draw attention to censorship issues and exert diplomatic pressure on repressive regimes.

### **Major Countries Affected**

**China:** The People's Republic of China has strict media censorship towards both traditional and online, as mentioned before. The Great Firewall is being used to block foreign media outlets and platforms.

**North Korea:** All media outlets in North Korea are state-owned, and the government tightly controls information flow. Access to global media is restricted except for some international news approved by the government.

**Islamic Republic of Iran:** The government strictly controls media outlets with the exception of state-owned media. The government has the authority to approve and revoke the license of journalists, without journalists can not work affiliated with their occupation.

**Saudi Arabia:** Traditional and online media platforms must obey specific laws and regulations. Media can not report certain topics such as criticizing religious figures or the royal family. Foreign media outlets operating in Saudi Arabia are expected to obey these and such laws and their activities are monitored.

**Singapore:** In Singapore, The Media Development Authority (MDA) is the main regulatory power that controls the media industry. The government and MDA have managed media flow with a balance between diverse views and unity.



## Questions to be Addressed

1. How can countries in the Asia-Pacific region enhance their capacity for early warning systems and information sharing to mitigate the impact of disasters?
  2. What are the key challenges and barriers to regional collaboration in disaster preparedness and response, and how can they be overcome?
  3. How can ESCAP support member countries in developing and implementing their national disaster risk reduction and response plans within a regional framework?
  4. How can technology and innovation be leveraged to improve disaster risk assessment, early warning systems, and response mechanisms at the regional level?
  5. How can ESCAP promote knowledge sharing, capacity building, and technical assistance among member countries to strengthen their disaster resilience?
  6. In the context of climate change, how should regional strategies adapt to address the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events in the Asia-Pacific region?
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1. What reforms can be applied to grant media freedom in the region?
2. Are there any legal frameworks that could be strengthened to protect freedom of press in the region?
3. What measures can be taken to create awareness about media censorship and its consequences?
4. What collaboration and cooperation efforts could be adopted between international media organizations to ensure free journalism?
5. In what ways do non-governmental organizations contribute to creating a more free and uncensored media environment?
6. What role can ESCAP play in advocating for media freedom and supporting efforts to combat censorship in the region?

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