

United Nations Nations Unies

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

WEATHER RELATED EMERGENCIES DOMINATE UN DISASTER ASSESSMENT AND COORDINATION TEAM MISSIONS IN 2008

(New York/Geneva 23 December 2008): Disasters related to extreme weather events dominated the work of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) teams in 2008, while more countries joined the UNDAC system amid increasing requests for disaster awareness training.

“We are very pleased that 67 Member States have now joined the UNDAC system. This ensures that more of the world's disaster managers are available to the international community to share their valuable knowledge and expertise on how to prepare for and respond to disasters,” said Gerhard J.W. Putman-Cramer, Chief of the Emergency Services Branch of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The UNDAC System, managed by OCHA, is designed to support member states in coordinating disaster response during the first phase of a sudden-onset disaster. It also aims at strengthening national and regional disaster response capacity.

Ten of the 16 missions that UNDAC teams made in response to disasters in 2008 were related to floods and hurricanes.

Also during the year, Spain and the United Arab Emirates became members of the UNDAC system, and the number of requests for training rose significantly. Training programmes were organized in the Middle East and in Russia for members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Disaster awareness training is one of the requirements for UN Member States willing to join the UNDAC system. In 2009 training sessions will be organized for the West African region.

The UNDAC system was established in 1993 with experts from eight countries. Member States who join the system but have inadequate financial resources at their disposal are often supported by states with the required financial capacity.

Since its inception in 1993, UNDAC members have carried out 183 missions. The largest number of deployments were conducted in late 2004 and early 2005 in response to the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami. Forty-four experts from 16 countries and four agencies were deployed to five tsunami-affected countries. The second largest deployment also took place in 2005 in response to the earthquake in Pakistan in October of that year.

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