

Regional Level

UN/ISDR & the WB through the GFDRR
Address drought information availability & flow problems in Africa, initially by conducting inventory of capacities of existing institutions and mechanisms for drought risk reduction (AMCEN, AMCOW, ICPAC, ACMAD, AGRYMET, DMC-Harare, etc)

Purpose: (1) Strengthen for effective assessment, analysis and dissemination of drought data and information to users (2) build capacity to serve as depository and repository of drought information.

Objective:

To improve quality and quantity of data and information at resource centres in Africa for effective planning



Section 1

Raise awareness on reducing disaster risk

(Agenda items 1-3)

The focus of the first day was on raising awareness of the challenges and opportunities in disaster risk reduction. The day included interventions by heads of delegations, which allowed them to make statements on key commitments or policy changes since the adoption of the Hyogo Framework, and a high level dialogue with invited panellists on selected key issues.

All statements are available on the Global Platform website at:
<http://www.preventionweb.net/globalplatform/first-session/gp-1st-contributions.html>

Addresses and interventions by heads of delegations

The session opened with a video message from the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, the text of which is reproduced on page iii. Extracts from the keynote address by the Chair of the session, Mr. John Holmes, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, are provided on page v. Additional opening addresses were provided by guest speakers as follows.



Mr. Michael Ambühl

Secretary of State of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland

The Secretary of State of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, Mr. Michael Ambühl, stated that the participation of states in the ISDR system is essential to ensure a systematic and coherent support for national implementation of disaster risk reduction policies and strategies. He added that poor countries are disproportionately affected by disasters as their capacity to prevent and minimize risks remains limited, and that investment in disaster risk reduction needs to become a political and developmental priority. He noted with interest that several states had embraced the first session of the Global Platform as well as the ISDR system.



Princess Zahra Aga Khan

Aga Khan Development Network

H.R.H. Princess Zahra Aga Khan, representing the Aga Khan Development Network, stated that the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan and northern India had made her realize that it was vital that communities living at risk be given the tools and technologies, the education and training to evaluate the safety of their own environment and to adapt this environment to implement disaster risk reduction objectives. Nevertheless, disaster risk reduction often faces man-made barriers such as administrative, political, cultural and legal constraints that hamper the development and change of social and structural systems in high-risk areas.



Mr. Michel Jarraud

Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization

The Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Mr. Michel Jarraud, recognized the benefits of the coordination provided by the Hyogo Framework, which has been adopted by the WMO as a key element of its cooperation activities with the ISDR system and other stakeholders. He added that at the fifteenth World Meteorological Congress, held this year, disaster risk reduction had been endorsed as the highest priority. The Congress also sanctioned the WMO Disaster Risk Reduction Action Plan, aimed at further reducing the loss of lives, livelihoods and property in relation to weather-, water-, and climate-related hazards around the world. The Hyogo Framework was the basis for formulating further strategic priorities as well as the basis for the WMO disaster risk reduction plan.

*Mr. Jeffrey Gutman**Vice-President of Operations Policy and Country Services of the World Bank*

The Vice-President of Operations Policy and Country Services of the World Bank, Mr. Jeffrey Gutman, stated that investment in mitigation of disaster risks had steadily increased, with World Bank investment doubling from the mid-1980s to a figure approaching \$2 billion today. However, he added that more needs to be done, including creating effective mechanisms for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction at country level. He referred to the World Bank's Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery⁷ which had recently been launched in partnership with the ISDR and donors and that one of its main activities was to help high-risk countries undertake disaster risk reduction and climate change impact assessments and to formulate and implement risk mitigation strategies. The Facility aims to systematically target all disaster hot-spot countries by 2015.

Further interventions were made in plenary session by representatives of 74 governments and 30 organizations (see list in Annex 3; all available statements can be found on the web site or accompanying CD-ROM). The key issues raised were the following:

Many interventions referred to the high levels of poverty and environmental degradation, which made communities more vulnerable to natural hazards. Some countries informed the session that they had taken initiatives to integrate disaster reduction into poverty reduction strategies. Several delegates underlined the importance of integrated disaster risk reduction and development planning, also in the context of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)⁸.

Several countries and representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGO) emphasized the importance of community-based action, particularly in the area of preparedness and rehabilitation, as well as the need for public-private partnerships. A number of countries and organizations acknowledged the vital role of NGOs in all phases of disaster preparedness, response and rehabilitation.

A number of interventions referred to the need to change the dominant disaster response-based approach to a more preventive and holistic view of disaster risk reduction. There is a need to change from a reactive to a proactive strategy.

The importance of science and technology was also underlined. In this context, some developing countries urged for transfer of appropriate technology, in particular technology related to early warning, information and risk management, preparedness and response initiatives.

Adaptation to climate change was seen as a vital element in dealing with disaster risk reduction and of increasing importance when designing policies for disaster risk reduction.

Several countries pointed out the need for regional cooperation to fill the national gaps in the response to disaster risk reduction needs. Global strategies need to be designed in collaboration with regional partners.

Several developing countries identified the lack of funding as one of the major challenges in addressing disaster risk reduction objectives, and requested that more funds be made available for better implementation of the Hyogo Framework. In this context, one country called for the establishment of a special financial mechanism that would reflect the level of political commitment of the international community and would provide funds for a basic infrastructure to address disaster risk reduction, particularly in developing countries. Other countries also appealed for increased bilateral funding.

“Only by sharing our respective experiences of challenges confronted and progress made, can we move implementation forward and make the creation of resilient societies a reality.”

Statement by Ambassador Gaudine J. Mtshali, Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations.

⁷ Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction: <http://www.worldbank.org/hazards/gfdr>

⁸ Millennium Development Goals: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

A large number of countries emphasised that there was a need for advocacy and for making the case of disaster risk reduction. The benefits of implementing disaster risk reduction policies, including the economic benefits, should be publicized in order to increase political support. Several speakers supported the idea of elaborating a cost-benefit analysis of disaster risk reduction in the design of developmental projects and strategies.

Interventions by a few specialized agencies and other international organizations focused on activities related to disaster risk reduction, carried out according to their mandates and competencies. Activities ranged from assistance in the establishment of early warning systems to the creation of institutions designed to improve coordination at all levels. Some organizations noted that disaster risk reduction was included in their programmes of activities through explicit decisions taken by their governing bodies.

"We welcome the holding of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction as a multi-stakeholder mechanism with an important advocacy role. It is an ideal forum to share best practices and learn from each other's experiences."

*Statement by Bisweswar Bhattacharjee,
Head of the Indian Delegation*

High level dialogue

On the afternoon of 5 June, the Chair introduced item 3.2 of the agenda, namely a high level dialogue on three key areas of interest: (i) reducing disaster risk through the Hyogo Framework as a strategy for climate change adaptation, (ii) reducing disaster risk in urban settings and mega-cities, and (iii) challenges, costs and opportunities to implement disaster risk reduction. He explained that this session was designed to provide an opportunity for participants to exchange good practices and lessons learned and to provide guidance on the selected subject areas, focusing also on national and local implementation. He introduced Ms. Mishal Husain, an anchor for BBC World and BBC National News bulletins, who would chair the discussions⁹.

Reducing disaster risk through the Hyogo Framework as a strategy for climate change



Saleemul Huq

Director of the Climate Change Programme of the International Institute for Environment and Development

Saleemul Huq noted that, according to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (www.ipcc.ch), climate change is no longer a problem for the future but one of the present, as temperatures had already risen 0.5 °C in the last century. He identified the main geographical areas that would be most affected and that would need to work on adaptation activities as the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the African continent, Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Asian mega deltas regions. He stressed the importance of focusing on the adaptation side of climate change, for which considerable funding was available.



Christelle Pratt

Director South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission

Christelle Pratt explained the special situation of the Pacific small island states as being particularly vulnerable to climate change. Small island states need to cooperate with other stakeholders on disaster risk reduction as they cannot address the issue on their own. She informed that a disaster risk management partnership network was recently established for the Pacific region. She stressed that it is crucial to mainstream disaster risk management and adaptation for climate change into national planning, using an all-government and all-country approach within a sustainable development context.

⁹ The high level dialogue was organized by ISDR consultant Mr. John Horekens.

*Daniel Gagnier**Chair of the Board of Directors of International Institute for Sustainable Development*

Daniel Gagnier emphasized the need to establish a policy and a legal framework that best addresses disaster risk reduction. He mentioned that often the language is too technical and scientific to reach the wider public. There was much to learn from the private sector, especially the ability to create synergies and concentrate on results and performance. Among other objectives he pointed out that clear governance for disaster risk reduction is needed to retain the interest of the private sector.

Reducing disaster risk in urban areas and mega-cities

He Yongnian, Professor of Seismology and an administrative official in the management of earthquake prevention and disaster reduction in China, pointed out that mega-cities are often located in high-risk areas. He underlined the importance of shifting attention from response to prevention. In doing so, public participation was essential.

Violeta Seva, a specialist in urban management issues and former General Manager of Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, emphasized the need for increasing capacity building of local communities. She underlined the need to recognize the importance of the role of mega-cities in disaster risk reduction and the need for outside financial resources and technical expertise.

Kadir Topbas, since 2004 the Mayor of Istanbul Province and an architect by profession, described the extensive activities carried out in Istanbul in the area of earthquake risk analysis and risk reduction. He stressed that the participation of NGOs and civil society is crucial for prevention as well as being an essential link to local government. The city of Istanbul has been carrying out preventive action and risk analysis for earthquakes, based on the city's own lessons learned from a powerful earthquake and its aftermath. A participant noted how Istanbul's case could be used as a model for preventive action by other cities.



L-R: Panelists He Yongnian, Disaster Reduction Society, China; Violeta Seva, Earthquake and Megacities Initiative; and Kadir Topbas, Mayor of Istanbul, on reducing disaster risks in urban settings and megacities.

Challenges, costs and opportunities to implement disaster risk reduction

Robin Burgess, a Reader in Economics at the London School of Economics and co-director of its Economic Organization and Public Policy Programme, identified lack of political will as the main problem. The challenge was to establish greater accountability and clear lines of responsibility at all levels, central, regional and local. He said that clarity in the distribution of responsibilities would increase incentives to deal with disaster risk reduction. He also pointed out that there is a need for a set of international guidelines against which the performance of each country could be measured. He finally stated that climate change had placed disaster risk reduction back in the political agenda of countries.

Dean R. Hirsh, President and Chief Executive Officer of World Vision International, highlighted the power of the “collective”. He underlined the need to strengthen capacity at local level with the participation of civil society. He warned that the MDGs would not be met unless disaster risk reduction was at the forefront of international action.

Lousewies van der Laan, a former member of the Dutch Parliament and of the European Parliament (Liberal Democrat) and environmental specialist, pointed out that there was a need for legislation on disaster risk reduction. She also underlined the importance of awareness-raising of politicians at all levels. She proposed to create a “best practices checklist” for disaster risk reduction and make it available to the media, NGOs and civil society. Disaster risk reduction must become an important election issue and be included in political campaigns.



The high level dialogue panel, moderated by Mishal Hussain (center standing).

Reto Schnarwiler, Head of the Public Sector-Business Development at Swiss Reinsurance, mentioned that insurance companies had accumulated much experience and knowledge on this subject which should be taken into account when designing disaster risk reduction strategies. He also highlighted the importance of public-private partnerships in tackling increasing vulnerability to disaster risks.

Mishal Husain, moderator of the session opened the floor for discussion. The major focus was on issues related to responsibility and accountability, action at the local and community level, financial resources, political commitment and gender.

Several members of the audience identified the need to establish a clear division of responsibilities. Some countries pointed out that, even though responsibility lies primarily with national governments, their action alone does not suffice to achieve disaster risk reduction. It was recognized that local authorities and communities are in the front-line and, therefore, also bear a great responsibility. Other sectors and groups of society also have a role to play, namely, representatives of civil society, non-governmental organizations, and scientists. Leadership and action lies with the government, which should therefore be made accountable. Several participants welcomed the idea of

Roundtable of ISDR donors

In response to the calls for more investment in disaster risk reduction, and better coordination and tracking of investments, an informal roundtable of 18 donors¹⁰ was held on 6 June, 2007, chaired by Ms. Margaretta Wahlstrom, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. The meeting was briefed on progress on the integration of disaster risk reduction in the external cooperation policies and programmes of donors and on the biennial work programme process of the ISDR system. This included a presentation of the work planning process of the ISDR secretariat, to be implemented over 2008-2009, and the ISDR system global level joint work programme (November 2007), the latter being presented by the Ms. Kathleen Cravero, Assistant Administrator of UNDP. Donors shared experiences on mainstreaming and thoughts on developing common practices of good donorship for risk reduction, including means to leverage each others' core competences. The importance of appropriate indicators was noted. It was agreed that further efforts should be made to secure the eligibility of disaster risk reduction as a development assistance priority, particularly in the guidelines of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee. It was proposed that donor governments should strengthen advocacy with United Nations executive boards in order to translate UN political commitment into more effective programmatic action.

¹⁰ Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, European Commission and World Bank.

elaborating a comparative table that would describe the performance of countries compared against established benchmarks. Some participants said that the broadcasting of “good stories” of governments that had actually prevented major disasters thanks to an effective disaster risk reduction action could be used as a model for others to follow.

Various interventions by developing countries emphasized that lack of resources was a major constraint on governments in addressing disaster risk reduction, given the many high priorities faced, particularly in relation to poverty reduction.

Some participants expressed interest in the elaboration and wide distribution of codes of best practices and guidelines. A representative of the ISDR secretariat stated that the secretariat had started to produce such documents; for example a publication on drought would be released the following day¹¹.

As concerned political commitment, some countries welcomed the idea of using the issue of disaster risk reduction as a subject for political campaign at the national level. Grassroots action of women was recognized as vital for prevention at all stages of disaster risk management and reduction. There is also a need to carry out research on the disproportional effects of natural hazards on women.

¹¹ ISDR also produced a guidance document “Words Into Action: A Guide for Implementing the Hyogo Framework” as well as guidelines and good practices addressing NGOs, gender and national platforms. See ISDR website for a full overview of recent ISDR publications at: <http://www.unisdr.org/>