



GLOBAL PLATFORM GEARS UP

UNISDR -15 June 2009

By mid afternoon today (Monday), around 700 of more than 1,800 Global Platform participants had 'checked in' at the Geneva conference centre.

Much of the day has been occupied by a series of pre-session events, including various regional platform meetings, concluding with a national platform gathering in the late afternoon (see below).

Meanwhile, the market-place – packed with booths installed by over 30 ISDR partners – is already proving a popular place to visit.

A further highlight of the day was the launch of the Australian government's disaster risk reduction program at a reception in the evening.

GREENING THE PLATFORM

This week's Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction will be carbon neutral, in line with the "Greening the UN" initiative which aims at climate neutrality. Accordingly, the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) secretariat, which is organizing the conference, has already instigated various measures to minimize the "carbon footprint" of the four-day event.

Notably, UNISDR has committed to a considerable financial outlay: the carbon emissions resulting from the occasion will be offset by supporting a Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) approved project with a strong disaster risk reduction component. This will entail compiling a post event, greenhouse gas inventory in order to calculate the tonnage of carbon dioxide produced by all participants' travel and conference facility energy consumption.

A call for tender will be organized to select the most compelling project - perhaps a reforestation scheme to reduce the risk of droughts, land slides, floods or desertification. Other possibilities could include mangrove planting to protect coastal zones from storm and tsunami impact, as well as a watershed regeneration or soil conservation program.

"Our efforts mark a milestone for UNISDR to become a 'green' secretariat" says Carolin Schärpf UNISDR Associate Program Officer, who is coordinating the initiative. "So we are calling for the active support of our conference participants in making the Global Platform a truly carbon neutral event".

Participants have been strongly encouraged to fly economy or take the train and, when attending the gathering, to use public transport and avoid any unnecessary printing, photocopying and waste production. UNISDR itself is 'walking the talk' by printing all conference materials on recycled paper, choosing a caterer which uses local and organic products and hosting a 'Green Desk' at the venue.

MORTALITY RISK INDEX

As a precursor to the Platform, Assistant Secretary-General and Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction Margareta Wahlstrom gave details of a new Mortality Risk Index to a packed press conference this morning.

The Index lists some 200 countries and territories within 10 sudden onset risk categories, ranging from extreme (six territories) through to negligible (11).

Using the Index, it is also possible to identify multi/combined, relative and absolute risk by territory, covering four sudden onset hazards which form the bulk of natural hazard events – tropical cyclones, earthquakes, floods and landslides.

Compiling the Index has entailed a complex two-year modeling of hazard mapping, exposure calculations and vulnerability analysis, calibrated by each territory's disaster history over more than three decades, to provide a state-of-the-art global profile of sudden onset hazard mortality.

"In today's world, no location can be considered as safe from sudden onset or weather-related hazard," stresses Margareta Wahlstrom, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction. "The clock is ticking and it is more essential than ever before for Governments to devise and implement real and sustainable risk reduction solutions – such as investing in disaster proofing of schools and hospitals – at both national and community levels."

MEETINGS' ROUND UP

Highlights from today's various pre-session meetings, include:

- ASEAN stressed the importance of reviewing benchmarks & baseline indicators for the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.
- Discussion of concrete follow-ups to the Kuala Lumpur Protocol on the establishment of the Central Asian Coordination Center for Disaster Preparedness and Disaster Risk Reduction.
- Tajikistan delegation referred to 4th ECO International Conference on Disaster Risk Management which is going to be held in Oct 2009 in Dushanbe and asked for financial and technical support by donors and ECO Secretariat.
- Greater coordination, support and guidance for integrating risk reduction actions into development agendas at local, national and regional levels and increased involvement of other relevant actors.
- Facilitate a thematic platform on geographical and spatial technologies information systems (UN-SPIDER).
- Enhance South-South cooperation mechanisms.
- Recommendations from the senior policy forum on advancing common frameworks ranged from setting specific financial targets to prioritizing coherence within the UN system approach to these fields.
- At the Global Meeting of National Platforms preceding the Global Platform of the ISDR representatives from National Platforms agreed on Recommendations to be delivered to the Plenary. The Recommendations underline the crucial role of National Platforms in effective implementation of disaster risk reduction. The Recommendations highlight among other the urgent need to better link disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation on national and on international level. Specific recommendations addressed to nations, the USG of UN-ISDR and ISDR system partner like regional and international organizations have been agreed upon.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

The Global Platform's market place on the conference centre ground floor, is already bustling with exhibits and people.

Among the most interesting is an art display of eight pictures – entitled 'where are we going' and including a half-submerged car and a swimming tiger.

It is the work of Bangladeshi artist Imtiaz Shohag: "Being a victim myself of floods and hurricanes, I try to illustrate on my canvas the violence of such catastrophes, which I hope will alert the viewer to the degradation of the planet and encourage responsible action."

Further information: www.shohag.fr

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IISD Daily Web Coverage: <http://www.iisd.ca/ymb/gpdr2/>

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