



WCDRR HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 16 MARCH 2015

The third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction continued its deliberations with two ministerial roundtables taking place on “Governing Disaster Risk: Overcoming Challenges” and “Reducing Disaster Risk in Urban Settings.” A high-level partnership dialogue convened in the afternoon, on “Risk-sensitive Investment: Public-private Partnerships.”

Working sessions addressed several topics, including resilient tourism and preparing for disaster-induced relocation. The World Bank, the Government of Japan and partners hosted a special round of the Resilience Dialogue series, exploring how to scale up and sustain funding and implementation of disaster and climate risk programs to advance post-2015 resilience goals.

In the evening, two separate award ceremonies took place, recognizing achievements in DRR and documentary film.

MAIN COMMITTEE

Following a full day of “informal informals,” the Main Committee reconvened at the end of the afternoon, aiming to clean up the text as far as possible so as to leave time for discussion of the proposed political declaration. Several edits to the text were agreed, but the issues of international cooperation, technology transfer, a reference to human rights and the right to development, as well as CBDR remained unresolved by early evening. Discussions continued into the night.

GENERAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS

Country delegations: Delegates delivered formal statements throughout the day, highlighting national actions on DRR.

Hungary noted the importance of transboundary cooperation, citing successful cooperation with Slovenia and Croatia to limit Mura River flood damage in 2014. Israel said assistance for DRR, response and recovery should be on a mutually agreed basis. Ethiopia noted links between DRR and the broader post-2015 development agenda, strongly committing to the success of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa in July.

A number of delegates expressed their support for Vanuatu, as it contends with the havoc wreaked by Tropical Cyclone Pam.

Intergovernmental and other organizations:

Representatives of intergovernmental and other organizations delivered formal statements throughout the day. The UN High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS said the post-2015 framework for DRR’s recognition of the special situations of these vulnerable countries is encouraging, and noted that the *Global Assessment Report on DRR 2015* found that future annual losses in SIDS will amount to almost 20% of their total social expenditure.

MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLES

Governing Disaster Risk - Overcoming Challenges: María del Pilar Cornejo, Minister Secretary for Risk Management, Ecuador, chaired the roundtable, inviting ministers to share their national experiences of promoting DRR policies. Many speakers outlined legislative and policy measures taken in their countries to support disaster preparedness and response at the national level, as well as establishment of structures to strengthen district and village-level preparedness. Several countries stressed the need for strong leadership and community involvement, poverty reduction, private sector engagement, development of early warning systems, prevention and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Heads of UN Agencies emphasized accountability, equity and implementation of legislation as essential elements of DRR and DRM.

Sudan highlighted the negative implications of land degradation and biodiversity loss for disasters. Mauritius highlighted national and regional preparedness measures, including a food security fund, a climate change information exchange center for the Indian Ocean region and a toolkit of adaptation options for local authorities. The United Arab Emirates said cooperation among all government agencies and NGOs is the best way to succeed in governing disaster risk. Spain said capacity building is “irreplaceable,” noting that its civil protection system is built into the state administration. The Holy See said religious and cultural traditions are rich sources of resilience, and that the conference outcome should mention not only indigenous but also other religious traditions. The African Union reported that there is increased appreciation and political will regarding DRR in her region, with most national DRR offices established within the office of the President or Prime Minister.

Reducing Disaster Risk in Urban Settings: Pravin Jannadas Gordhan, Minister, Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, South Africa, chaired the session, noting that urbanization trends present new challenges for policymakers, and that lessons learned need to be incorporated into future planning processes.

Ministers and high-level delegates then considered the importance of building codes and effective land-use planning, noting that the most vulnerable city-dwellers bear the brunt of disasters. Many spoke of the risks posed to urban areas by climate-related disasters, with Ghana calling for DRR-compliant building plans. China drew attention to his country’s adaptation plan, which contains strategies to shift to green energy sources. Brazil reported on national actions to address urban risk including the “urbanization of favelas.”

Among many others, Uganda and Ghana called for decentralization of urban industries and amenities, while Trinidad and Tobago highlighted the work of the country’s



Ministry of the People in encouraging a people-centered approach to resilience. Egypt shared her country's experience in urban planning, including the establishment of a government-led urban upgrading policy and the implementation of a real estate tax used to upgrade rural settlements. Japan shared the experience of rebuilding Hyogo after the 1995 earthquake, highlighting livelihood restoration and preparedness activities including engaging the community in preparedness drills.

Some others, including Zambia, Jordan, Nepal and Madagascar, spoke on mainstreaming DRR policies into urban and national planning processes, and the need for public-private partnerships to encourage investment in disaster-resilient infrastructure. UN-Habitat outlined the importance of empowering local authorities and creating public awareness among urban residents.

HIGH-LEVEL PARTNERSHIP DIALOGUE

Risk sensitive investments - Public-private partnerships: Chair Fuat Oktay, Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Authority, Turkey, introduced the dialogue, noting that strong public-private partnerships can make DRR a driving force for sustainable development.

Keynote speaker Gaëlle Olivier, AXA Asia, noted there are now five times the number of disasters annually compared with 50 years ago, with the costs having increased tenfold. She noted the insurance sector has US\$30 trillion of assets under management, representing a third of global assets. She stressed the sector needs to be more proactive in working with government and regulators to invest responsibly, including by better understanding, preventing and managing risk.

In a panel discussion, moderated by journalist David Eades, senior public and private sector representatives agreed on the critical importance of public-private partnerships in achieving DRR and managing recovery to "build back better," given that every taxpayer dollar invested could leverage between US\$3 and US\$8 from the private sector. Panelists noted that there are strong incentives for the private sector to seek partnerships, given increased costs from interruptions to supply chains in a globalized economy, and stressed that trust-building across governments and societies would be crucial. They highlighted the need for the public sector to "lay down codes" for a disaster resilience framework, and for the private sector to consider its role in effective investment to ensure business continuity in the aftermath of a disaster.

WORKING SESSIONS

Towards a Resilient Tourism Sector: Veronica Pedrosa, media correspondent, moderated the session. In a keynote speech, Thomas Silberhorn, Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany, called for including the tourism industry as a private-sector partner in all DRR and DRM processes.

Panelists then considered the need to incorporate the tourism sector into the post-2015 framework for DRR, and heard about Australia's national strategy for disaster resilience. They also recounted how Cuba, despite a weak economy, implemented new disaster preparedness measures in the recovery process following storm damage, and discussed Samoa's experience of establishing a climate early warning system to communicate effectively with tourists on potential risks. Panelists further presented on the role of the hotel industry during disasters, and on the Hotel Resilient Initiative that aims to develop an auditable system to enable hotels and resorts to be more prepared and resilient to disasters. Participants raised questions on, *inter alia*, building resilience in the tourism industry in the face of terrorism, engaging the insurance industry in promoting resilience, and developing a multi-sector approach to addressing disasters.

Preparing for Disaster-Induced Relocation: The session was chaired by Nadeem Ahmed, Lieutenant General and former Chair of the National Disaster Management Authority, Pakistan.

Introducing the session, he noted that relocation is often the most difficult component of DRR and disaster response. Panelists agreed that planned relocation, whether pre- or post-disaster, needs to be a measure of last resort, as part of a comprehensive DRR and development strategy, and not as an isolated measure. William Lacy Swing, Director-General, International Organization for Migration, noted the increased movement of populations requires a stronger focus on mobility and relocation in the post-2015 framework for DRR. Alexander Pama, National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council, Philippines, shared practical examples of how enhanced pre-disaster risk assessments have guided authorities' decisions on temporary relocation in the context of typhoons. Panelists also highlighted the importance of providing livelihood support and not creating new socio-economic vulnerabilities in the place of relocation, stressing that, "planned relocation is not merely a housing project." Others noted the importance of legal frameworks, a rights-based approach, participation and capacity building of local authorities and communities. Sanjula Weerasinghe, Georgetown University, noted the need for international guidelines for planned relocation, particularly in the context of climate change adaptation. Participants also shared experiences of relocation from Pakistan, Latin America and the Caribbean, Syria and other places.

AWARD CEREMONIES

Film Awards: Veronica Pedrosa, media correspondent, hosted the event and announced the winners of the first edition of the International Award for Best TV Documentary on DRR, organized by UNISDR, the Asia Broadcasting Union and the European Broadcasting Union. Among twelve shortlisted films, four were selected as winners. "Rebuilding Sichuan" from Discovery Channel won the category Best TV Documentary Award, while "The Kamaishi Miracle" by NHK (Japanese Broadcasting Corporation) won Best Human Story. The prize for Best Investigative Story was shared by "It's Time" by GMA Network Philippines and "Britain Underwater" by BBC Panorama. Best Innovative Documentary went to "Vets in the Disaster Zone" by Dragonfly Film and Television Productions. The ceremony featured trailers presenting the films in competition per category.

Risk Awards: Walter Ammann, Global Risk Forum, introduced the 2015 awards ceremony and Margareta Wahlström outlined how the award recognizes community-focused innovation, an essential part of managing risk in advance. Thomas Loster, Munich Re Foundation, informed guests that many innovative projects had been submitted among the 145 applications from 62 countries. The All India Institute of Local Self-Government won the 2015 award for a project engaging women in hillside and riverbank slum communities in Pune, India, in conducting self-assessment and planning for risk, using participatory visual tools.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Many delegates hoped that Monday's informal informals would "break the deadlock," underlining the need for ownership of the final product: in the words of one delegate, "If you want a global framework, you need global buy-in." A seasoned delegate remained unconvinced that issues that had been discussed throughout the preparatory process, including language on occupied territories, would be easily resolved here. On the content, a negotiator noted that it is unwise to "put too many elephants in the same room," a veiled reference to attempts to include human rights-based approaches to disaster risk management in the framework.

With only two days left, and discussions behind closed doors still ongoing, one delegate confided that, "Not all expectations will be met."