



SUMMARY OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON DISASTER REDUCTION: 18-22 JANUARY 2005

The UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) was held from 18-22 January 2005, at the Portopia Hotel, in Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan. Approximately 4,000 participants attended the WCDR, including representatives from 168 governments including more than 40 ministers, 78 UN specialized agencies and observer organizations, 161 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and 562 journalists from 154 media outlets. The WCDR aimed to increase the international profile of disaster risk reduction, promote its integration into development planning and practice, and strengthen local and national capacities to address the causes of disasters that hamper development in many countries.

The WCDR coincided with the tenth anniversary of the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, which took over 6,000 lives in Kobe. Yet it was a more recent event that provided additional relevance for the WCDR – the earthquake-tsunami in the Indian Ocean on 26 December 2004, which affected the coastlines of at least 12 countries and led to the deaths of over 200,000 people and the loss of livelihoods of millions.

Discussions at the WCDR resulted in two negotiated documents: a programme outcome document entitled “Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters: Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015,” and the Hyogo Declaration. Delegates also took note of the “Review of the 1994 Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World and its Plan of Action” and adopted a “Common statement on the Special Session on the Indian Ocean Disaster: Risk Reduction for a Safer Future.”

Coming as it did in the wake of one of the most devastating disasters in a century, the Conference was widely acknowledged to have successfully responded to the urgent needs of the world with uncanny real-time precision. Worries that the Conference’s scheduled work would be upstaged by the last-minute surge in political profile, attendance and media spotlight on the Indian Ocean disaster were dispelled as participants succeeded in addressing the urgent needs of the disaster’s aftermath while maintaining a focus on the long-term goal of reducing disaster risk and vulnerability.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF UN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

In recent years, the importance of disaster reduction has grown on the international agenda. Hazards, including floods, drought, storms, landslides, locust and grasshopper infestations, earthquakes, tsunamis and epidemics are having an increasing impact on humans, due to population growth, urbanization, rising poverty and the onset of global environmental changes, including climate change, desertification and biodiversity loss. Most policymakers and academics acknowledge that poor planning, poverty and a range of other underlying factors create conditions of vulnerability that result in insufficient capacity or measures to reduce the potential negative consequences of risk. Consequently, vulnerability contributes as much to the magnitude of the disaster risk as do the natural hazards themselves. Thus, hazards only result in disasters if high risk conditions are present. Many experts consider that action to reduce risk is now essential in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION: An increase in human casualties and property damage in the 1980s motivated the UN General Assembly in 1989 to declare the 1990s the International Decade

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for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) (resolution 44/236). The aim of the IDNDR was to address disaster prevention in the context of a range of hazards, including earthquakes, windstorms, tsunamis, floods, landslides, volcanic eruptions, wildfires, grasshopper and locust infestations, and drought and desertification.

YOKOHAMA STRATEGY AND PLAN OF ACTION: One of the main outcomes of the IDNDR was the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World and its Plan of Action, adopted in 1994 at the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction held in Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan. The Yokohama Strategy sets guidelines for action on prevention, preparedness and mitigation of disaster risk. These guidelines are based on a set of Principles that stress the importance of risk assessment, disaster prevention and preparedness, the capacity to prevent, reduce and mitigate disasters, and early warning. The Principles stem from the recognition that preventive measures are most effective when stakeholders at all levels are involved, and that vulnerability can be reduced by applying “proper design” and “patterns of development” focused on target groups. The Principles also state that the international community should share technology to prevent, reduce and mitigate disasters, and demonstrate a strong political determination in the field of disaster reduction.

INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY FOR DISASTER REDUCTION: At its 54th session in 1999, the UN General Assembly decided to continue the activities on disaster prevention and vulnerability reduction carried out during the IDNDR. It thus established the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), which is supported by the scientific and technical expertise and knowledge accumulated during the IDNDR. An Inter-Agency Secretariat and an Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction (IATF) for the implementation of the ISDR were also established (resolutions 54/219 and 56/195 respectively). Among its mandated tasks, the IATF convenes *ad hoc* expert meetings on issues related to disaster reduction. Its tenth meeting was held in Geneva from 7-8 October 2004.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 58/214: In February 2004, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 58/214, deciding to convene the WCDR. The resolution sets out the objectives of the WCDR, which are to: conclude the review of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action with a view to updating the guiding framework on disaster reduction for the 21st century; identify specific activities aimed at ensuring the implementation of relevant provisions of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), adopted in 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD); share best practices and lessons learned for supporting and facilitating disaster reduction within the context of attaining sustainable development, and identify gaps and challenges; increase awareness of the importance of disaster reduction policies to facilitate and promote their implementation; and increase the reliability and availability of appropriate disaster-related information to the public and disaster management agencies in all regions, as set out in the relevant provisions of the JPOI.

PREPARATORY PROCESS: Following the adoption of resolution 58/214, a WCDR Preparatory Committee was established and charged with the preparation of a framework for

action and a declaration to be adopted at the WCDR. An ongoing review of the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy and its Plan of Action provided the context for these documents. The WCDR and preparatory process were supported by the ISDR Secretariat, which was designated as the Conference Secretariat.

Prepcom I: The first session of the WCDR Preparatory Committee was held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 6-7 May 2004. The meeting addressed procedural issues, including the adoption of the provisional rules of procedure of the WCDR, organization of work and arrangements for accreditation and participation in the preparatory process and the WCDR. Delegates also heard a progress report on the preparatory process of the WCDR, and discussed the outline of the review of the Yokohama Strategy and its Plan of Action and the proposed elements for the WCDR framework for action. The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of Prepcom I can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol26/enb2602e.html>

Prepcom II: The second session of the WCDR Preparatory Committee convened in Geneva from 11-12 October 2004. Delegates considered a revised version of the draft framework for action. In addition, delegates addressed: the accreditation of NGOs and other major groups to the preparatory process and the WCDR; the provisional rules of procedure for the preparatory process and the WCDR; the format and draft agenda of the WCDR; and the proposed WCDR partnerships mechanism. Delegates also heard a progress report on the WCDR preparatory process and discussed the draft review of the Yokohama Strategy and its Plan of Action. At the conclusion of the second session, the Preparatory Committee agreed to establish an open-ended drafting committee to continue working on the draft framework for action and to consider the draft political declaration. The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin's* coverage of Prepcom II can be found at: <http://www.iisd.ca/vol26/enb2603e.html>

Drafting Committee: Fifty-four States participated in the open-ended drafting committee, which met regularly in Geneva to negotiate the draft framework for action. Following the release of the draft on 21 December 2004, participants continued to meet until 14 January 2005, addressing the draft declaration prepared by Japan. At the conclusion of negotiations, unresolved issues included: definitions and scope of the hazards addressed by the WCDR, and whether technological and environmental risks should also be considered; linking risk reduction to climate change; financial resources; reference to related intergovernmental processes, currently outlined in an annex to the document; and regional responsibilities, such as cross-border river-basin management. The drafting committee also commented on the draft declaration, which was drafted by Japan.

WCDR REPORT

On Tuesday, 18 January 2005, Sálvano Briceño, Director, ISDR Secretariat, invited Jan Egeland, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to open the WCDR. Egeland welcomed participants and the Emperor and Empress of Japan. A minute of silence was observed in memory of the lives lost in the Indian Ocean disaster.



In their opening statements, numerous speakers expressed sympathy for the countries affected by the Indian Ocean disaster. In a video message, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stressed the timeliness of the WCDR, and expressed hope that it would contribute to building community resilience, mobilizing resources, and galvanizing global actions.

Egeland said disaster risk reduction is not an additional expense, but an essential investment and a moral imperative, and proposed that a portion of emergency relief spending be earmarked for disaster risk reduction.

Japan's Emperor Akihito stressed the importance of learning from past disasters and said Japanese technology could contribute to saving lives around the world.

Yoshitaka Murata, Japan's Minister of State for Disaster Management, gave examples of resilience-building efforts and underlined the importance of multi-stakeholder participation.

Toshizo Ido, Hyogo Governor, invited participants to visit the public forum and attend the special sessions on tsunami early warning systems.

Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi outlined his country's relief and recovery efforts following the Indian Ocean disaster, and stressed the importance of learning from past disasters.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Egeland suggested that the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee continue to serve as the WCDR Bureau. The Conference endorsed the proposal for Yoshitaka Murata to serve as WCDR President, as well as for the following Vice Presidents: Hernán Escudero (Ecuador); Hans-Joachim Daerr (Germany); Mohammad Hossein Moghimi (Iran); Omar Hilale (Morocco); and Yury Brazhnikov (Russian Federation). Mohammad Hossein Moghimi served as Rapporteur.

President Murata recalled that the European Union (EU) and US had been unable to reach agreement on the changes to the provisional rules of procedure proposed at the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee. He noted continued discussion on the disputed elements, and proposed the provisional application of the rules, to which the Conference agreed. The Conference then adopted the agenda (A/CONF.206/1), taking note of additional sessions on the Indian Ocean disaster.

The Conference agreed to appoint a Credentials Committee, composed of representatives from Austria, Benin, Brazil, Bhutan, China, Ghana, the Russian Federation, Trinidad and Tobago and the US. On 22 January, Conference Coordinator John Horekens announced that credentials of all delegations had been approved (A/CONF.206/5). The Conference adopted the Committee's report.

The Conference approved the WCDR organization of work, including the establishment of a Main Committee charged with completing negotiations on the draft framework for action and declaration. Delegates agreed that Marco Ferrari (Switzerland) would chair the Main Committee.

The WCDR was organized into three segments: an Intergovernmental Segment, a Thematic Segment, and a Public Forum. In the Intergovernmental Segment, which was convened in plenary from 18-22 January, delegates met in the Main Committee to negotiate the Framework for Action and the Hyogo Declaration. Delegates also discussed the Review of the

Yokohama Strategy and held a Special Session on the December Indian Ocean Disaster. From 18-21 January, the plenary heard general statements by countries and intergovernmental and other organizations.

The Thematic Segment included three high-level round tables, held from 18-19 January. Five panel presentations and 46 sessions convened from 18-21 January on five themes identified as challenges and gaps during the review of the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy. The Thematic Segment also included regional sessions, a special session on tsunami disaster mitigation in the Indian Ocean and special forums on links between disaster risk reduction and other intergovernmental processes and private sector activities.

The Public Forum included workshops, exhibition booths and poster sessions and took place throughout the five-day conference.

The following report summarizes discussions and outcomes of the WCDR, organized according to its three segments.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL SEGMENT

GENERAL STATEMENTS: Over 120 countries and 13 intergovernmental and regional organizations made general statements from 18-21 January, many expressing gratitude to the Government of Japan for hosting the WCDR, and conveyed sympathy to the countries affected by the Indian Ocean disaster. Copies of the statements are available on the WCDR website: <http://www.unisdr.org/wcdr>.

PROGRAMME OUTCOME DOCUMENT – BUILDING RESILIENCE OF NATIONS AND COMMUNITIES TO DISASTERS: FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION 2005-2015:

The Main Committee took up the draft framework for action 2005-2015 (A/CONF.206/L.2) in numerous formal and informal meetings from 18-21 January, working late several nights in an effort to complete negotiations before the closing plenary on Saturday, 22 January.

Discussions focused on the remaining bracketed issues following intersessional negotiations in Geneva. Issues of greatest contention included: definitions and scope of the framework; reference to climate change; a proposal by Japan to mention a target to halve lives lost from water disasters by 2015; post-conflict rehabilitation and human security; the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities; resource mobilization; shared river basins; an EU proposal on developing targets and indicators; and an Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) proposal on the outcome of the review of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA).

On the definitions and scope of the framework, delegates debated whether hazards referred to by the framework should include natural hazards only, or those induced by human processes as well. This debate had emerged from pre-session negotiations in Geneva, with Iran preferring to include natural hazards only, and other countries favoring the reflection of a broader definition. In the end, the definitions and scope refer to both types of hazards.



On references to “climate change,” the US, opposed by the EU and many others, preferred removing the wording. An informal group addressed the issue, reaching agreement to retain several references late Friday night, 21 January.

On the proposal by Japan to mention a target to halve lives lost from water disasters by 2015, delegates debated the placement of this proposal, but also whether it was appropriate to refer to one type of disaster only. In the end, the proposal was placed as a footnote under the section on tasks for regional organizations and institutions.

On reference to post-conflict rehabilitation, the EU, supported by many countries, preferred to retain the reference, however disagreement centered on its placement in the text.

On human security, Japan preferred to retain the reference, but delegates opposed the notion as unclear and too general, and the reference was substituted with Cuba’s proposed text on “survival, dignity and livelihoods of individuals.”

On the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, Brazil argued that this reference was necessary if the text was to include reference to climate change, due to the strong links between this principle and action on climate change. The EU, Japan and the US said the principle was too specific in the context of disaster risk reduction. Resolution of the issue was dependent on outcomes in the informal discussions on the climate change reference. In the end, reference to the principle was replaced by reference to the importance of international cooperation and partnerships.

On resource mobilization, reference to new funding mechanisms was dropped, including the proposal to create a specific global fund to assist disaster-prone developing countries to set up national strategies and plans of action for disaster risk reduction. Resource mobilization was made conditional on the financial capabilities of donors.

On river-basin management across borders, Bangladesh, opposed by Turkey, preferred to make specific reference to the issue. The reference was retained.

Regarding the EU proposal on developing targets and indicators, which was supported by many countries, the US preferred to mention only indicators, insisting on placing the task of developing targets at the national level. In the end, delegates agreed to request the ISDR and IATF to consult with relevant organizations in developing generic, realistic and measurable indicators, so that these can assist States to assess their progress in the implementation of the Framework.

On the proposal by AOSIS to include reference to the outcomes of the review of the BPOA, delegates agreed to include this under general considerations for implementation and follow-up.

In plenary on 22 January, Main Committee Chair Ferrari reported on outcomes of the discussions, noting that the Framework enjoys broad ownership and offers guidance on promoting a culture of disaster prevention at all levels. President Murata described the document as “credible” and “respectable,” and the Conference adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015.

Final Document: The 24-page programme outcome document “Building the resilience of nations and communities to

disasters: Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015” (A/CONF.206/L.2/Rev.1) is organized into four sections, and contains an annex detailing key multilateral developments related to disaster risk reduction.

Preamble: In the preamble, the Framework defines “hazards” as potentially damaging physical events, phenomena, and human activities that may cause the loss of life or injury, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation. The scope of the Framework encompasses disasters caused by hazards of natural origin and related environmental and technological hazards and risks. It says that disaster loss is rising with grave consequences due to increasing vulnerabilities related to, *inter alia*, environmental degradation, climate variability, climate change, and epidemics.

WCDR: Objectives, expected outcome and strategic goals: Regarding the objectives, expected outcome and strategic goals of the WCDR, the Framework resolves to pursue “the substantial reduction of disaster losses, in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries” by 2015. The Framework outlines three strategic goals to achieve this:

- more effective integration of disaster risk into sustainable development policies, planning and programming at all levels, with a special emphasis on disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness and vulnerability reduction;
- development and strengthening of institutions, mechanisms and capacities at all levels, in particular at the community level, that can contribute to building hazard resilience; and
- incorporation of risk reduction approaches into emergency preparedness, response and recovery programmes in the reconstruction of affected communities.

Priorities for Action 2005-2015: The Framework outlines general considerations and key activities in five areas:

- ensuring that disaster risk reduction is a national and local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation;
- identifying, assessing and monitoring disaster risks and enhancing early warning;
- using knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels;
- reducing underlying risk factors; and
- strengthening disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.

Regarding early warning of regional and emerging risks, the Framework calls for regional and international cooperation, as appropriate, to assess and monitor regional and trans-boundary hazards, exchange information and provide early warnings through appropriate arrangements, such as, *inter alia*, those relating to the management of river basins. The role of adaptation to climate change in reducing disaster risk is mentioned repeatedly as a priority for action.

Implementation and Follow-up: In the section on implementation and follow-up, the Framework sets out that the goals and priorities for action should be addressed by different stakeholders in a multi-sectoral approach. It calls on States, regional and international organizations, including the UN and international financial institutions (IFIs) to integrate disaster risk reduction into their sustainable development



policies, planning and programming at all levels. It notes that the Framework's implementation will be "appropriately reviewed." The Framework outlines tasks for States, regional organizations and institutions, and international organizations. It requests assistance from the ISDR partners, particularly the IATF, in consultation with relevant UN agencies, regional and multilateral organizations, technical and scientific institutions, interested States and civil society to develop generic, realistic and measurable indicators to help States assess their progress in implementation of the Framework. These indicators should be in conformity with internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. States are then encouraged to develop or refine indicators at the national level. On resource mobilization, States are to undertake to:

- mobilize resources and capabilities of national, regional and international bodies;
- support the Framework's implementation in disaster-prone developing countries, *inter alia*, addressing debt sustainability;
- mainstream disaster risk reduction measures into development assistance programmes, including those related to adaptation to climate change;
- contribute to the UN Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction; and
- develop partnerships to spread out risks, reduce insurance premiums and increase financing for post-disaster reconstruction and rehabilitation.

HYOGO DECLARATION: The Main Committee took up the draft declaration on Friday, 21 January, with debate focusing on: reflecting the role of investments that fail to consider disaster risks in generating vulnerability; the role of the UN in disaster reduction; reference to good governance; the particular vulnerability to hazards of least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS); and the need to develop indicators. In plenary on Saturday, 22 January, Main Committee Chair Ferrari reported on negotiations, and delegates adopted the Hyogo Declaration.

Final Document: The preamble of the Hyogo Declaration (A/CONF.206/L.3/Rev.1) refers to the recovery of Kobe City from the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake and expresses delegates' condolences and solidarity with the people and communities adversely affected by disasters, particularly those devastated by the Indian Ocean disaster. The Declaration also recognizes the experience accumulated by the international community in disaster risk reduction through the IDNDR and ISDR, and the link between sustainable development and investment in disaster reduction. The Declaration expresses determination to reduce disaster losses and reaffirm the vital role of the UN system in disaster risk reduction.

In the operative part of the Declaration, delegates declare that they will build on relevant international commitments and frameworks to strengthen disaster reduction activities for the 21st century. The Declaration recognizes the intrinsic relationship between disaster reduction, sustainable development and poverty eradication, as well as the importance of involving all stakeholders.

The Declaration also recognizes that a culture of disaster prevention must be fostered at all levels and that resilience of nations must be built further through people-centered early

warning systems, risks assessments, education and other proactive, integrated, multi-hazard and multi-sectoral approaches.

The Declaration further affirms that States have the primary responsibility to protect people and property on their territory from hazards and that disaster risk reduction should be given high priority in national policy. The need to enhance the capacity of disaster-prone developing countries, LDCs and SIDS is also mentioned.

The Declaration proclaims the adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 as a guiding framework for reducing disasters over the next decade and stresses the critical need to translate it into concrete actions at all levels. The need to develop indicators, strengthen cooperative and synergetic interactions among stakeholders and promote voluntary partnerships for disaster reduction is also recognized. Resolve is expressed to further develop information-sharing mechanisms on all aspects of disaster risk reduction and a call is made for action from all stakeholders to make the world safer from the risk of disasters within the next decade for the benefit of present and future generations.

Finally, appreciation is expressed to the government of Japan for hosting the WCDR and to the Hyogo Prefecture for its hospitality.

REVIEW OF THE YOKOHAMA STRATEGY AND PLAN OF ACTION FOR A SAFER WORLD: In plenary on Friday, 21 January, Sálvano Briceño introduced the Review of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World (A/CONF.206/L.1), which was prepared by the ISDR Secretariat based on input from the IATF, governments, international organizations and NGOs during the WCDR preparatory process. Comments were forwarded to the Main Committee discussions on the draft framework for action. Delegates commended the Secretariat and its partners on their work and took note of the content and conclusions of the Review of the Yokohama Strategy as a basis for the framework for action.

Review summary: In the introduction, the document outlines the Review's background and methodology and explains the basis for the commitment to hazard, vulnerability and risk reduction. It describes accomplishments and remaining challenges in the areas of: governance; risk identification, assessment, monitoring and early warning; knowledge management and education; underlying risk factor reduction; and effective response and recovery preparedness.

Among the accomplishments of the Yokohama Strategy, the Review highlights, *inter alia*:

- countries' forceful expression of well-founded interests through policy statements such as the JPOI;
- evidence of expanded global understanding of the relationships between poverty, sustainable environmental practices, the management of natural resources and global risks, such as concerns associated with climate variation, urban growth, global health issues, and modern technology;
- positive, if partial, progress towards mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into national planning and development strategies;



- considerable progress in the expanded and more inclusive focus on the social dimensions and multi-sectoral aspects of human vulnerability;
- the increase in interdisciplinary and organizational relationships, with a wider appreciation of the essential principle of partnership and equitably-shared responsibilities and resources; and,
- the expanding availability, dissemination and use of information focused on disaster risk reduction.

In addition to a lack of systematic implementation, cooperation and reporting of progress, the Review identifies other challenges to the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy Principles, including:

- on governance, ensuring the judicious allocation of resources from emergency and development budgets to disaster risk reduction strategies, and the incorporation of local community interests in these strategies;
- on risk and early warning, building people-centered early warning systems integrating the essential dimensions of risk assessment, warning generation, dissemination, preparedness and response capabilities;
- on knowledge management and education, pursuing research agendas bringing together multiple disciplines and professional interests and developing institutional capabilities for collecting, disseminating and using current and traditional disaster-reduction information;
- on reducing underlying risk factors, enhancing the use of technical measures by disaster-prone countries and encouraging local adoption of financial instruments to share, transfer or minimize risk exposure, particularly among the most vulnerable populations and within local communities; and,
- on preparedness for effective response and recovery, expanding public dialogue related to shared and complementary disaster and risk management needs and responsibilities, and evaluating the current suitability of all disaster and risk management policies against present and emerging risks.

The Review's conclusions recognize that numerous individual examples and efforts illustrate awareness and expressions of the importance of disaster risk reduction, and that greater efforts are needed by all stakeholders to put their intentions into action.

The annex to the Review outlines the evolution of the Yokohama Principles into a renewed policy framework for disaster reduction, based on good practices and implementation options.

The Secretariat intends to disseminate comprehensive material reflective of the Review process through various products for different audiences.

SPECIAL SESSION ON INDIAN OCEAN DISASTER:

In plenary on Thursday, 20 January, WCDR President Murata chaired a Special Session on the Indian Ocean disaster. Abdulahi Majeed, Maldives' Deputy Minister of Environment and Construction, reported on Wednesday's special session on an Indian Ocean early warning system. K. Radhakrishnan, Director, India's National Centre for Ocean Information Services, presented an Indian initiative on a tsunami and storm surge

early warning system. Jan Egeland praised the international community's unprecedented response, noting that within three weeks nearly all those affected by the tsunami had food, shelter, and health, water and sanitation facilities.

Delegates then heard panel interventions on experiences with the Indian Ocean disaster from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Kenya, Thailand, China, Japan, Germany, the US, Australia and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Many delegations expressed sympathy to affected countries and stressed the importance of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN/OCHA) coordination in delivering assistance. Several countries outlined their national responses to the tsunami disaster and detailed technical, data and financial commitments to the establishment of an early warning system. Delegates discussed necessary attributes of an early warning system, and intergovernmental organizations highlighted their potential contributions. Commending the international response to the disaster, the EU, UK, World Food Programme (WFP) and UNICEF stressed the need to also provide support to less conspicuous crises, such as hunger and HIV/AIDS.

Common statement: The "Common statement of the Special Session on the Indian Ocean disaster" (A/CONF.206/L.6/Rev.1) reflects the many views in the lead-up to the Special Session and the initiatives voiced at the Session and the Conference.

In the statement, the Conference recommends establishing and strengthening regional disaster reduction mechanisms for all relevant natural hazards, and outlines elements of a strategy for establishing an Indian Ocean tsunami early warning system.

The statement emphasizes the importance of lessons learned from the Indian Ocean disaster, invites UN/OCHA and other international organizations to integrate regional disaster reduction strategies in their work programmes, and requests the ISDR Secretariat to prepare a report on regional mechanisms for disaster reduction for submission to the UN Economic and Social Council and General Assembly.

The Conference welcomes the discussion of early warning systems at the Third Ministerial Earth Observation Summit on 16 February in Brussels, Belgium, the ministerial meeting on regional cooperation on tsunami early warning arrangements on 28-29 January 2005, in Phuket, Thailand, and Germany's offer to host a UN conference on early warning in early 2006.

The statement recognizes the need to use the experience of the existing Pacific Ocean early warning system and emphasizes the need to tailor, under UN coordination, an Indian Ocean tsunami early warning system to the region's specific circumstances.

The Conference appreciates steps by countries of the Indian Ocean to provide for interim early warning in the Indian Ocean and commends the many generous offers of financial and technical assistance from countries across the globe to help establish a tsunami early warning system for the Indian Ocean.

THEMATIC SEGMENT

HIGH-LEVEL ROUND TABLES: Disaster risk – the next development challenge: This round table took place on Tuesday, 18 January, and was facilitated by Yvette Stevens, UN/OCHA.



In a recorded message, World Bank President James Wolfensohn emphasized the link between poverty and disaster reduction efforts and noted the disproportionately high economic impact of disasters in low-income countries. Sadako Ogata, President, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), said empowering local communities is key to disaster preparedness. Gareth Thomas, UK International Development Minister, called for raising the profile of disaster reduction on the development agenda and adopting practical solutions.

UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer underlined the high returns, in terms of risk reduction, of environmentally sound activities. UNDP Associate Administrator Zephirin Diabre stressed capacity building, good governance and coordination of disaster risk management. Geert van der Linden, Vice President, Asian Development Bank, noted a paradigm shift from disaster response to mitigation and preparedness. Bernd Hoffmann, Director, German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), called for increased funding for disaster reduction in development programmes.

In the ensuing discussion, participants addressed the adoption of time-bound targets, funding issues, technical cooperation, and mainstreaming risk reduction in development.

Learning to live with risk: This round table took place on Tuesday, 18 January, and was facilitated by Peter Walker, Director of the Feinstein International Famine Center, Tufts University.

UNESCO Director-General Koichiro Matsuura said the 2005-2015 UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development must include knowledge and training for disaster reduction. Corazon Alma de Leon, former Chair of the Mount Pinatubo Commission, presented on a school-based community mobilization programme for responding to hazards. Toshizo Ido described reconstruction since the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. Edgardo Calderón Paredes, Chair, Disaster Preparedness and Relief Commission of IFRC, described the relationship between vulnerability and development. Hans Van Ginkel, United Nations University Rector, called for improved knowledge of risks and vulnerabilities through site-specific and targeted research and learning.

In the discussion, participants highlighted: civil input into reconstruction; the protection of national treasures; traditional knowledge; and voter support for disaster preparedness policies. One speaker suggested incorporating monitoring and feedback mechanisms as well as sanctions into the outcome documents, and another proposed setting education targets for 2010.

Emerging risks: What will tomorrow hold? This round table took place on Wednesday, 19 January, and was facilitated by Sálvano Briceño.

Keith Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada, said disaster reduction requires effective partnerships with all stakeholders, political will, and a global monitoring system. Li Xueju, China's Minister of Civil Affairs, called for the use of technology to improve risk assessment, disaster mapping and local capacity building. Michel Jarraud, Secretary-General, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), emphasized the high

return of investment in disaster reduction and said WMO is committed to halving the number of lives lost due to disasters in the next decade.

Ashoka Kumar Rastogi, India's Disaster Management Secretary, stated that disaster management should be decentralized and mainstreamed into development strategies. Josef Odei, Ghana's National Disaster Management Organization, on behalf of Thomas Broni, Ghana's Minister of the Interior, noted that early warning systems are useless if not accompanied by education of local communities. Daniel Biau, Deputy Executive Director, UN-HABITAT, recommended adopting compulsory and realistic building codes, discouraging settlement in disaster-prone areas, and using new technologies.

In the discussion, participants addressed the need to consider disaster reduction as a high-return investment, and make links between disaster risk and climate change, as well as conflicts.

SPECIAL SESSION ON THE PROMOTION OF TSUNAMI DISASTER MITIGATION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN: This session took place on Wednesday, 19 January, and was chaired by Koichi Nagasaka, Director-General, Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA).

Koichiro Matsuura said a tsunami early warning system for the Indian Ocean could be implemented in less than a year, and stressed that such a plan should extend to all countries in the Indian Ocean basin, including relevant African States and SIDS. In her keynote speech, Laura Kong, Director, International Tsunami Information Center, stressed the need for rapid sea-level evaluations, data sharing, and education on the limitations of early warning systems.

Participants heard reports from the Pacific region. Charles McCreery, Director, Pacific Tsunami Warning Center, recommended a multilateral approach to an Indian Ocean early warning system. Noritake Nishide, Director, JMA Seismological and Volcanological Department, presented Japan's early warning system for local and distant tsunamis, including its forecasting technology. François Schindelé, Chair, International Coordination Group for the Tsunami Warning System in the Pacific, stressed that tsunami mitigation programmes must be implemented at national and local levels and highlighted two international technical meetings scheduled for March 2005 in Paris, France, on tsunami early warning systems.

Participants then heard reports from the Indian Ocean. Prih Harjadi, Director, Indonesia's Geophysical Data and Information Center, reported on his country's vulnerability to tsunamis. Kriengkrai Khovadhana, Deputy Director-General, Thailand's Meteorological Department, presented a plan to educate citizens and tourists. K. Radhakrishnan outlined an initiative for mitigating storm surges and tsunamis. Sarath Weerawarnakula, Director, Sri Lanka's Geological Survey and Mines Bureau, suggested an early warning system for cyclones as well as tsunamis. Abdulahi Majeed said the recent tsunami set back Maldivian development by two decades. Akihiro Teranishi, Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, stressed the role of basic tsunami awareness. Shimogouchi Tsukasa, Director, Disaster Management Division of Japan's Fire and Disaster Management Agency, outlined Japan's success in reducing tsunami risk. Reid Basher, Senior Adviser, ISDR, said an early warning system



should include social and natural scientists and civil society organizations.

Kenji Satake, Chair, Tsunami Commission of the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics, chaired a panel discussion on the establishment and operation of a tsunami early warning system. Shuhei Kazusa, Director, Japan's Earthquake and Volcanic Disaster Management Cabinet Office, highlighted Japan's preparedness measures. Fumihiko Imamura, Tohoku University Disaster Control Research Center, underscored the importance of studying earthquake mechanisms and tsunami propagation. Geoff Love, Australia's Director of Meteorology, recommended that an Indian Ocean early warning system build on existing institutions to ensure its sustainability. Maryam Golnaraghi, Chief, WMO Natural Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Programme, noted a multi-disciplinary expert meeting to be held in Jakarta, Indonesia, in March 2005, and highlighted the importance of multi-hazard warning systems. Harjadi said Indonesia's Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Earthquake Information Center could be strengthened to become a tsunami information center. Kong emphasized local community involvement and culturally appropriate responses.

THEMATIC CLUSTERS: Throughout the week, delegates attended five panels and 46 sessions on the cluster themes identified in the review of the Yokohama Strategy: governance, institutional and policy frameworks for risk reduction; risk identification, assessment, monitoring and early warning; knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience; reducing the underlying risk factors; and preparedness for effective response. *Editor's Note: The Earth Negotiations Bulletin's coverage was limited to the five thematic panels, and to one session from each cluster. A summary of the Thematic Segment is included in the document "Draft Summary Report of the Thematic Segment of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction."*

Cluster 1 – Governance, institutional and policy frameworks for risk reduction: Sessions were held on: the role of IFIs in mainstreaming risk; national platforms; policies for community risk reduction; critical facilities indicators; accountable and transparent governance; prevention and adaptation to climate change; risks in mountainous regions; local governance; and vulnerability in megacities.

Cluster Panel: This panel took place on Thursday, 20 January, and was chaired by Glaudine Mtshali, South African Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva. She said good governance is a prerequisite to elevating disaster reduction on the development agenda.

Kenneth Westgate, Senior Regional Advisor, UNDP, highlighted the importance of political commitment, multi-stakeholder participation, and financial resources to achieve good governance in disaster risk reduction, and presented voluntary targets for governments. Keiichi Tango, Senior Executive Director, Japan Bank for International Cooperation, urged that disaster risk reduction programmes be linked to the MDGs. Irmgard Schwaetzer, Chair, German Committee for Disaster Reduction, discussed the role of national platforms and said good governance in risk management requires a multi-stakeholder, multi-level and multi-disciplinary approach.

Martin Owor, Assistant Commissioner, Uganda's Department of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees, noted that only a handful of African countries have developed national strategies for disaster reduction and stressed the need to identify all stakeholders at the outset of policy making to ensure effective strategy implementation. Khursid Alam, Policy Advisor, Action Aid International's International Emergency Team, emphasized the need for governance to be people-centered and ensure the participation of vulnerable groups.

The ensuing discussion focused on: overpopulation as a root cause of vulnerability; the need for accountability, coordination among donor agencies, and participatory approaches; and the role of national and regional platforms.

Cluster Session: Local governance – Preconditions for effective disaster risk reduction: This session took place on Friday, 21 January, and was chaired by Christina Bollin, Programme Manager, Disaster Risk Management in Development Cooperation, GTZ.

Horst Müller, Head of Division, Developmental Relief and Transitional Aid, Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, highlighted the role of good local governance in risk reduction. Angeles Arenas, Regional Disaster Reduction Advisor, UNDP, said governance policies should strengthen social capital through equity and inclusiveness. Lucas Simão Renço, District Administrator of Búzi, Mozambique, outlined a successful risk management programme incorporating participatory risk analysis, simulations, traditional knowledge, and local committees. David Smith, Regional Advisor, JICA Central America, stressed the importance of documenting lost livelihoods as well as lost lives. Oscar René Alcántara, Honduran civil society representative, underlined the benefits of civil society participation for long-term planning in a politically unstable context. Mohammed Yousaf Pashtun, Afghanistan's Minister of Urban Development and Housing, said his country has a new opportunity to build effective governance structures.

In the discussion, participants referred to marginalized communities' relationships with municipal governments, risk caused by development, decentralization in multi-cultural regions, and coordination among government agencies.

Cluster 2 – Risk identification, assessment, monitoring and early warning: Sessions were held on: integrated approaches to flood and drought risk management; multiple hazards in urban settings; trends and indicators of vulnerability; efficient risk communication; effective and people-centered early warning; data for evidence-based policy making; and reducing risk through Earth observations.

Cluster Panel: The panel was held on Wednesday, 19 January, and was chaired by Helen Wood, US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Barbara Carby, Jamaica's Office for Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management, said decentralizing capacity can empower communities, but that maintaining interest is difficult, especially if extreme events occur infrequently. Kenzo Hiroki, Japan's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, stated that early warning systems could halve the number of deaths caused by water disasters by 2015, but only if they include evacuation infrastructure and education programmes. Laban



Ogallo, Project Coordinator, WMO Drought Monitoring Centre-Nairobi, outlined the difficulty of monitoring in countries with low technological capacity. Erich Plate, University of Karlsruhe, called for an interdisciplinary approach to risk management and risk-commensurate forecasting methods. On establishing actionable early warning systems, Loy Rego, Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, underscored the need to learn from good practices and respect local knowledge.

In the discussion, participants addressed the definition of vulnerability, time-bound targets, risk sharing in poor communities, man-made disasters and cross-border sharing of real-time data.

Cluster Session: Integrated flood risk management through appropriate knowledge sharing and capacity-building systems:

This session was held on Thursday, 20 January, and was co-chaired by Bruce Stewart, Assistant Director, Australian Bureau of Meteorology, and Akira Terakawa, Director, Secretariat for Preparatory Activities of UNESCO-Public Works Research Institute Center.

On knowledge sharing, Atu Kaloumaira, Risk Reduction Adviser, South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission, highlighted the importance of integrating hydrological and meteorological information to improve disaster response and preparedness. Bobby Prabowo, Project Manager, Indonesia's Directorate General of Water Resources, underscored the issue of debris and sediment flow in flash floods. Slobodan Simonovic, University of Western Ontario, detailed interagency flood-response activities.

On capacity building, Joachim Saalmüller, Project Officer, WMO Associated Programme on Flood Management, focused on legal aspects of integrated flood management. Andreas Haiduk, Water Resource Engineer, Jamaica's Water Resources Authority, discussed lessons learned from the use of flood warning tools. Il-Pyo Hong, Research Fellow, Korea Institute of Construction Technology, presented a case on capacity building for flood hazard mapping. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, Chair, Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad, reported on community flood management committees in South Asia.

Participants then discussed a draft statement on integrated flood risk management.

Cluster 3 – Knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience: Sessions were held on: education for sustainable development; educating young professionals; cultural heritage risk management; gender-balanced public awareness initiatives; implementing research and development; cost-benefit analyses; research and mitigation for floods, landslides, and earthquakes; supporting community resilience; and capacity building.

Cluster Panel: This panel took place on Wednesday, 19 January, and was chaired by Alberto Maturana, Director, Chile's National Emergency Office.

UNESCO Director-General Matsuura emphasized the need to respect local knowledge. Purna Bahadur Khadka, Nepal's Minister of Home Affairs, stressed formal and non-formal education for raising earthquake awareness. Yukio Yoshimura, Vice President, World Bank, highlighted the Bank's Global Development Learning Network, and introduced interventions

from participants in Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Vietnam, via live video conference. Hiroyuki Kameda, Kyoto University, presented on field-based knowledge development and implementing innovation in research communities. Gloria Bratschi, Argentine prevention planning specialist, suggested employing methods used by the media for risk prevention. Eva von Oelreich, Director of Disaster Policy, IFRC, spoke on the importance of building resilient communities, with due regard for local customs and cultures. Everett Ressler, Senior Programme Officer, UNICEF Emergency Services, stressed children's vulnerability to disasters, and proposed prioritizing children in risk reduction strategies.

Cluster Session: Creating a culture of prevention – gender balanced public awareness initiatives: This session took place on Thursday, 20 January, and was facilitated by Bratschi. Cheryl Anderson, Gender and Disaster Network, reported on the production of the "Gender and Disaster Sourcebook." Mahdavi Ariyabandu, Programme Team Leader, Intermediate Technical Development Group (ITDG) South Asia, presented South Asian cases of mainstreaming gender in public education. Ramiro Batzin, journalist, Indigenous Council of Central America, reported on the Mayan application of the Riskland Game, an educational tool to raise awareness of hazards. Ana Maria Bejar, Representative in Cuba, Save the Children UK, described gender-targeted disaster preparedness campaigns. Xavier Castellanos, Disaster Preparedness Delegate, IFRC, discussed the media's responsibility in disaster warning. Pedro Ferradas, Regional Delegate in Charge of Preparedness, ITDG, focused on the rights of vulnerable populations in disasters. Rowena Hay, Managing Director, Umvoto Africa, discussed women as powerful actors in disaster reconstruction. Armine Mikayelyan, President, Women for Development, highlighted participation by women and children in the UN World Disaster Reduction Campaigns. Ricardo Pérez, Regional Information Officer, Pan American Health Organization, reported on the use of radio soap operas for disaster awareness education.

Cluster 4 – Reducing the underlying risk factors:

Sessions were held on: funding risk reduction; disaster risk and financial services; environmental management and disaster reduction; policies for safer buildings; community-based disaster management; post-disaster recovery; disaster prevention in rural areas; resilient and sustainable livelihoods; and reducing risks to health, health facilities, and other critical infrastructure.

Cluster Panel: This panel took place on Tuesday, 18 January, and was chaired by Borbély László, Romania's Minister Delegate for Public Works and Territory Management.

Yong Sung Park, Chair, International Chamber of Commerce, discussed the role of the private sector in disaster management. Tsuneo Okada, Director-General, Japanese Disaster Prevention Association, stressed the need to retrofit existing buildings to new standards. Rocío Sáenz, Costa Rica's Minister of Health, outlined Latin America's experience with hospital vulnerability. Svein Tveitdal, Director, UNEP's Division of Environmental Policy Implementation, highlighted links with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and noted UNEP's intention to establish, with ISDR, a global programme focusing on environmental management in disaster risk



reduction. Speaking on behalf of David Nabarro, World Health Organization (WHO) Office of the Director-General for Health Action in Crises, Wilfried Kreisel, Director, WHO Kobe Centre, called attention to the health sector's vulnerability to disasters.

Kazunobu Onogawa, Director, UN Centre for Regional Development, recommended that, by 2015, countries incorporate community-based disaster management into local and national development policies and ensure that schools and hospitals are disaster resistant. Amod Dixit, Secretary-General, Nepal's National Society for Earthquake Technology, said underlying risks are known, and outlined targets for building codes. Jamilah Mahmood, Chair, Working Committee of the Asian Disaster Reduction and Response Network emphasized women's central role in non-formal education and the importance of civil society as first responders.

In the discussion, comments focused on gender issues, the lack of common terminology and framework, an Indian Ocean early warning system, and the relevance of the MDGs.

Cluster Session: Disaster prevention functions and disaster-resistant sustainable livelihoods: This session took place on 21 January, and was co-chaired by Tadatsugu Tanaka, University of Tokyo, and Anil Subedi, Country Director, ITDG Nepal.

Mineichi Iwanaga, Japan's Senior Vice-Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, highlighted Japan's contribution in response to the Indian Ocean disaster. Yohei Sato, Tokyo University of Agriculture, said agricultural activities in rural communities can increase disaster resilience. Sumedha Jayasena, Sri Lanka's Minister of Women's Empowerment and Social Welfare, urged that reconstruction efforts focus on sustainable livelihoods. Taizo Homma, Director-General, Niigata Prefecture, Japan, explained the role of drainage systems in disaster reduction.

Rogelio Concepcion, Director, Philippines' Bureau of Soils and Water Management, discussed the multi-functionality of rice terraces. Fahmuddin Agus, Head, Indonesia's Soil Research Institute, noted the role of forestry and paddy cultures in the reduction of flood risk. Wu Bin, Beijing Forestry University, called for education and improved management. Madhavi Ariyabandu emphasized the link between climate change and livelihoods. Amjad Bhatti, development journalist, Rural Development Policy Institute of Pakistan, said States should not "bail out" of their prime responsibility to provide security to their citizens.

Cluster 5 – Preparedness for effective response: Sessions were held on: humanitarian preparedness; putting research into action; information and communication technologies; El Niño and food security; preparedness case studies; coordination and partnerships; and integrated approaches to disaster assessment.

Cluster Panel: This panel was held on Friday, 21 January, and was chaired by Siddiqur Rahman Choudhury, Secretary, Bangladesh's Ministry for Food and Disaster Management.

Carlos Scaramella, Chief, Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit, WFP, outlined the WFP's strategy for emergency preparedness. Randolph Kent, King's College London, said disaster risk reduction programmes and plans must be underpinned by strategies based on clear and concrete objectives. Noting existing capacity and mechanisms to reduce disaster

risk, he highlighted the need for political will to take effective preparatory action. José Llanes Guerra, Director, Cuba's National Disaster Office, outlined Cuba's civil defense approach, stressing the role of community-level activities and local leadership.

Fernanda Teixeira, Secretary-General, Mozambique Red Cross, emphasized long-term approaches to community-based disaster preparedness, the lack of funding for sustaining preparedness programmes, and the need for indicators and assessments to ensure readiness. Johan Schaar, Head of Division, Humanitarian Assistance and Conflict Management, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, highlighted the challenge of funding disaster preparedness, suggesting that humanitarian assistance budgets are already inadequate. Noting the changing nature of risks, Yvette Stevens stressed the international community's responsibility to address the global, regional and local risks that contribute to disasters.

Participants then commented on: the UN's role in coordinating preparedness; the lack of prioritization of disaster risk reduction; the link between poverty reduction priorities and disaster preparedness; the role of the Sphere Project's Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response; and the need for regional cooperation.

Cluster Session: Telecommunication saves lives – the role of information and communication technologies: This session took place on Tuesday, 18 January, and was facilitated by Cosmas Zavazava, Head, Unit for LDCs and Focal Point for Emergency Telecommunications of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). He highlighted ITU's ongoing work in the area of emergency communications, and stressed the critical role that telecommunications play in all aspects of disaster mitigation.

Samer Halawi, Regional Director for the Middle East and Africa, Inmarsat Limited, gave examples of existing satellite communication technologies saving lives and easing relief operations. He explained the activities of Télécoms Sans Frontières in helping establish communications for affected communities. Naoko Iwasaki, Assistant Director, International Cooperation Division, ITU Information and Communication Technologies Center, highlighted the role of universities in disaster management and their cooperation with government and business. Gary Fowlie, Chief of Media Relations and Public Information, ITU, spoke on the contribution of activities under the World Summit on the Information Society.

In the ensuing discussion, questions were raised on improving access of developing countries and vulnerable communities to communication systems, the costs of modern communication technologies, ITU initiatives on disaster management, and the role of global education on risk reduction.

REGIONAL SESSIONS: Five regional events were held during the week. On 19 January, a regional meeting was held on Central America. Regional meetings on SIDS and Asia were held on 20 January, and a session on "Geographical proximity – common threats" was held on 21 January.

REPORT ON THE DISCUSSIONS OF THE THEMATIC SEGMENT: In plenary on Saturday, 22 January, the Conference heard a report on the Thematic Segment. A summary report with an initial overview of the themes and emerging issues was



distributed, with a more comprehensive analysis report to be released after the Conference on the WCDR website (<http://www.unisdr.org/wcdr>). The report expresses the hope that the outcomes of the thematic segment will guide the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action and Declaration, and emphasizes participants' frequent calls for "concrete, visible and adequately funded" action. The report summarizes the key issues raised in the round tables, thematic panels and session discussions, noting that the most common recurring themes were mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into sustainable development and linking targets to the MDGs.

The Chairs of each thematic panel also reported on the week's discussions.

Reporting on Cluster 1, Mtshali highlighted the need to integrate disaster risk reduction into development planning. She said good governance is a prerequisite for risk reduction underpinned by social justice, and should incorporate strong leadership, decentralization, national cooperation and participatory processes that generate community resilience and focus on the poor and vulnerable.

Wood reported on Cluster 2, highlighting the importance of people-centered early warning, interdisciplinary approaches, and policies linking local, national and international dimensions and incorporating traditional knowledge.

Maturana reported on Cluster 3, emphasizing the special role of children and schools as agents of education and said that the media, already effective in disaster reporting, could be a powerful tool for disaster education.

A Romanian delegate reported on Cluster 4, on László's behalf. He identified several factors contributing to disaster risk and said areas for future focus include reducing these vulnerabilities, developing management tools, promoting financial risk sharing, and developing public-private partnerships.

Choudhury reported on Cluster 5. He noted that while risk factors are widely acknowledged to be increasing, they are inadequately understood and insufficiently addressed, adding that these problems are particularly important in the sphere of climate change.

Rowena Hay reported to plenary on the outcomes of the regional events. She said that regions have made significant progress in developing long-term policies, strategies and institutional frameworks, and that increasing recognition of transboundary disasters has fostered regional initiatives. Noting that extreme events result in a "quantum shift in awareness," but that proactive change is slow, she called for "communal patience and steadfast commitment."

PUBLIC FORUM

On Saturday, 22 January, in plenary, Takahiro Harada, Deputy Director-General for Disaster Management, Japan's Cabinet Office, reported on the Public Forum that was held from 18-22 January and which consisted of a series of workshops, exhibition booths, poster sessions and a service center. He said approximately 40,000 people had visited the Forum, which had been prepared and coordinated by the WCDR Secretariat and the Governments of Japan and Hyogo. He praised the Forum for having permitted the sharing of experiences and lessons learned

from the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake and having made a significant contribution to the strengthening of networks for the establishment of disaster resilient communities.

More information about the Public Forum is available on the WCDR website: <http://www.unisdr.org/wcdr/>.

CLOSING SESSION

The closing session of the WCDR was held on Saturday, 22 January. Delegates heard reports on the discussions of the Thematic Segment and Public Forum, and the work of the Credentials Committee. They also adopted the programme outcome document "Building resilience of nations and communities to disasters: Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015" (A/CONF.206/L.2/Rev.1) and the Hyogo Declaration (A/CONF.206/L.3/Rev.1).

In their closing statements, delegates commented on the outcome documents. Sudan, on behalf of the African Group, said his region will spare no effort to secure an effective implementation of WCDR outcomes. Iran, on behalf of the Asian Group, voiced hope that the priorities defined in the document are fully implemented in the coming decade. Romania, on behalf of the Eastern European Group, expressed confidence that the outcome documents will provide guidance in risk reduction. Brazil, on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group, said the Framework and Declaration will lead to a new international awareness of disasters. Germany, on behalf of the Western European and Others Group, said agreement demonstrates a united international commitment to reduce disaster risk. The Japanese Red Cross Society said tasks ahead include transforming statements into concrete actions and setting firm targets and indicators.

A Civil Society Address to the WCDR was delivered to the plenary by Zenida Delica, Director, Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, on behalf of civil society organizations and the researchers in risk management and disaster response. The Address expressed grief over the death of those killed by the tsunami, and those affected by it, and shared the compassion of those who participated in the rescue efforts. It recognized the responsibility of all to translate the world's grief and compassion into lasting commitments and that of civil society to turn the vision of the WCDR into action over the next decade. The Address also stated that the passionate statements made in plenary and the insights exchanged in the thematic sessions have not reached the outcome document, and that governments are avoiding their responsibilities instead of making the strongest possible commitment. The Address declared that political will is the most important condition for disaster reduction and was lacking in the years following the Yokohama Strategy. It further recognized that disaster risk reduction is an essential element of development and called for its incorporation into the MDGs and the formulation of targets and earmarking of funds for accountable and transparent action. Finally, the Address urged delegates to ensure that the outcome document guarantees sustained political commitment that translates into concrete action to make the world a safer place for all.

Conference Rapporteur Moghimi presented the draft report of the Conference (A/CONF.206/L.7), noting that it would



be completed following conclusion of the Conference. The Conference endorsed the draft report.

In his closing remarks, Jan Egeland noted the Indian Ocean disaster had deepened the international community's obligation to establish a clear framework for action to reduce disaster risk and build resilient communities. He thus highlighted the WCDR's commitment to, *inter alia*: employ a multi-hazard approach to disaster reduction; place disaster risk at the center of policies, and integrate it into development work; fill the "development gap" to enable risk reduction by civil society actors and affected communities; reduce the knowledge and action gap; and build on the momentum of the Conference to accelerate implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action. He said that the ISDR Secretariat and IATF have been asked to prepare indicators of implementation, adding that, while the documents are not legally binding, they carry a strong moral commitment to guide States in their actions. Finally, he pointed to partnerships developed at the WCDR, including the International Early Warning Platform, the International Flood Initiative, and an alliance on earthquake risk reduction.

President Murata noted the WCDR's success in raising the profile of disaster risk reduction on the international agenda. He said that reducing vulnerability to hazards is the responsibility of States and communities, stating that humankind is sufficiently advanced to be able to avoid disasters. He urged the commitment and engagement shown at the WCDR to be translated into real actions. He expressed thanks and closed the Conference at 12:32 pm.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE WCDR

Even before delegates to the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) had completed their work, a general sense of satisfaction pervaded the ballrooms of Kobe-Hyogo's Portopia Hotel, and many were seen congratulating each other on a unique international event. Coming as it did in the wake of one of the most devastating disasters in a century (the 26 December earthquake-tsunami), the Conference, swept up by a tectonic shift from relative obscurity to the international center-stage, was widely acknowledged to have successfully responded to the urgent needs of the world with uncanny real-time precision.

If the last-minute surge in political profile, attendance and media spotlight had led to worries that the Conference's scheduled work would be upstaged, these concerns were dispelled as participants succeeded in addressing the urgent needs in the Indian Ocean basin while maintaining a focus on the long-term goal of reducing disaster risk and vulnerability. This brief analysis provides an overview of the discussions in Kobe, notes some contentious issues in the negotiation of the Conference's outcomes, and identifies some challenges for their implementation.

COPING WITH DISASTER

There were initial fears that the devastation brought upon the countries of the Indian Ocean, and its ensuing extraordinary humanitarian and media response, threatened to dwarf the WCDR, whose profile among other "world conferences" was never too prominent to begin with. Throughout the preparatory

process, it was clear that the gathering would be oriented to more technical experts, and it had long been decided it would assemble at the "senior official level."

However, to the organizers' credit, the hard work invested in the preparatory process paid off richly as they devised an agenda that not only included special sessions on the Indian Ocean disaster but also was able to redirect attention to the more mundane task of addressing the overriding problem of designing a long-term disaster risk reduction framework. Japan's commitment as host country to the WCDR also contributed to this success. Indeed, the commemorations of the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake at the Conference's opening, and the prominence of this and other cases through the sharing of experiences and lessons-learned in thematic cluster sessions and public forum events, ensured that considerations of long-term disaster preparedness, awareness, and mitigation were ever-present.

Delegates addressed the earthquake-tsunami disaster first in a Special Thematic Session devoted to the establishment of an early warning system and then in a Special Plenary Session at which many countries and organizations pledged their technical, informational and monetary support to the development, under UN coordination, of an Indian Ocean early warning system. The Conference issued a common statement outlining provisions for an interim early warning system and commitments to a process that will begin in earnest at a UNESCO-sponsored technical meeting in March 2005.

In addition, perhaps spurred by the many emotional presentations and the sobering images of the onslaught of waves broadcast at the outset of the technical session, a consensus was reached on the Hyogo Framework for Action, which carries considerable political and moral weight. The WCDR message stresses the centrality of integrating disaster risk reduction into sustainable development and poverty reduction policies, programmes and strategies. It also includes an impressive set of guidelines and practical suggestions for all countries to follow, if they wish to stand prepared in the face of the relentless rise in the incidence of natural and man-made catastrophes.

HYOGO OUTCOMES

As in any text drafted by 168 States, with the input of dozens of intergovernmental and other actors, the final wording represents a compromise on numerous issues. To their credit, countries exercised a proper reserve in addressing the more divisive issues. For example, technological disasters did not prove as controversial as some might have expected. Indeed, there was a tacit understanding that the consideration of issues as contentious as terrorism and nuclear safety should not risk derailing the negotiations.

However, agreement on a controversial reference to a link between disasters and climate change seemed elusive at first. The US and some of its closest allies questioned climate change as the major contributing factor to the increasing number of natural calamities across the globe, while other delegates, in particular the EU and the small island developing States, insisted on the important causal link between increasing hazards and climate change. The importance of this issue was made evident



by the overflowing attendance in the few thematic sessions that addressed the link. Yet, despite entrenched positions, in the eleventh hour, Marco Ferrari, the able Swiss Chair of the Main Committee, was able to broker agreement to acknowledge both climate change and variability.

In contrast to other intergovernmental dialogues, "good governance" was not preached with the same degree of fervor. Some delegates privately questioned its applicability in emergency situations where effective preparedness and speedy rehabilitation under a centralized command may be more important. Others were heard observing that, while Cuba may not qualify for good governance by some countries' standards, its successful civil defense and hurricane response system were commended throughout the meeting.

Divergent views on the issue of review were closely coupled with the call by many countries to develop targets and indicators. In the end, delegates agreed to "appropriately review" the Framework's implementation, without setting out specific timelines. Nevertheless, some were confident that the open-ended nature of the review provision was balanced by the agreement that countries would develop generic, realistic and measurable indicators, a necessary first step for tracking progress.

The main criticism leveled by participants at the negotiated document is the absence of clear donor commitments and time-bound targets. Indeed, even the reference to halving the number of lives lost through water-related disasters by 2015 was relegated to a footnote. In addition, attempts to introduce clear-cut obligations, especially for the provision of financial resources to developing countries, were firmly quashed by powerful donors. Civil society, represented by over 160 participating NGOs, was particularly vocal in this regard, and in their statement to the closing plenary they called for incorporating disaster risk reduction in the Millennium Development Goals and prioritizing it as a basic need. They highlighted the disconnect between the final agreement and the pragmatic cluster sessions and criticized governments for "opting for vision instead of action."

THE ROAD TO 2015

The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 is exactly what it says: a framework. While it stresses the role of early warning systems for natural hazards, advanced telecommunications and free information exchange, the WCDR underscores the realization that technical fixes are not the only answer. Consequently, the test of the conference decisions will lie in a broad range of people-centered activities, local communities' training and education, technological back-ups and regional approaches, in short, imbibing a culture of prevention at all levels. This translation of the Framework into concrete action at all levels is the essence of the Hyogo Declaration (originally drafted by the Japanese hosts), which captures the spirit of political determination and international solidarity, engendered by recent events and reinforced by the Conference.

The prevailing view in Kobe was that the success of the WCDR will be judged by the degree of coordination and coherence among all relevant actors. Many observed that, probably by virtue of its focus on real and present dangers, the

WCDR was surprisingly devoid of politicizing. Many attributed this success to the central role of UN agencies. Indeed, unlike other conferences where States dominate the preparatory process, the WCDR preparations were a finely balanced effort combining inputs from governments, the Secretariat and the Inter-Agency Task Force. Delegates also commended the ISDR Secretariat's role, and some were heard hoping that all international efforts might be channeled into a single process under the UN aegis.

Yet, in the hype surrounding the Conference some cautionary voices tried to put the problem of disaster reduction in a wider perspective. Even as delegates commended the unprecedented world-wide humanitarian response to the Indian Ocean disaster, a few impassioned interventions reminded the Conference that one week's deadly toll from poverty, starvation and communicable disease worldwide far exceeds the recent tsunami's devastation. The challenge for the disaster reduction community as it enters the next decade of action will be to apply its knowledge, tools and efforts to address these pervasive "silent tsunamis" that so often pass under the radar of the world media and community, which are more focused on extreme events.

In one of the thematic clusters, a panelist evoked the sinking of the Titanic. He likened the effect of the earthquake-tsunami to the jolt the world public received back in 1912. The tools to avert disaster were there, but the Morse code messages were not heard in time, the emergency flares were ignored by passing ships, and the lifeboats were few. That tragedy led to a rethinking of maritime safety rules. Today, the WCDR has tried to do just that by building on the 1994 Yokohama Strategy and answering global cries of "Never again!" It remains to be seen whether the groundwork laid in Kobe for a major rearrangement of safety rules for a disaster-prone world will endure.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

AVOIDING DANGEROUS CLIMATE CHANGE – A SCIENTIFIC SYMPOSIUM ON STABILIZATION OF GREENHOUSE GASES: This symposium will meet from 1-3 February 2005, at the Hadley Centre for Climate Research and Prediction (Met Office), in Exeter, UK. For more information, contact: Rhian Checkland; tel: +44-20-7008-8139; fax: +44-20-7008-8206; e-mail: rhian.checkland@cvg.gov.uk; internet: <http://www.stabilisation2005.com>

2005 EARTHQUAKE ENGINEERING RESEARCH INSTITUTE ANNUAL MEETING: This meeting will take place in Ixtapa, Mexico, from 2-6 February 2005. Commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the Mexico City earthquake, this meeting will highlight the impact of the event and the resulting progress made in all fields related to earthquake risk. For more information, contact: EERI; tel: +1-510-451-0905; fax: +1-510-451-5411; e-mail: eeri@eeri.org; internet: <http://www.eeri.org/news/meetings/05am.html>

26TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE: This conference will be held in Orlando, Florida, US, from 3-6 February 2005. For more information, contact: John Todaro, Director; tel: +1-407-281-7396 ext.17; fax: +1-407-281-4407; e-mail: jtodaro@femf.org; internet: <http://www.emlrc.org/disaster2005.htm>



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON COASTAL HAZARDS: This conference will convene in Thanjavur, India, from 9-11 February 2005. For more information, contact: H.R. Vasanthi, SASTRA Deemed University; tel: +91-4362-235842; fax: +91-4362-264346; e-mail: vasanthi@biotech.sastra.edu; internet: <http://www.sastra.edu/icch/index.htm>

EIGHTH WORLD CONGRESS ON STRESS, TRAUMA, AND COPING: This congress is sponsored by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) and will be held in Baltimore, Maryland, US, from 16-20 February 2005. For more information, contact: Shelley Cohen, ICISF; tel: +1-410-750-9600; fax: +1-410-750-9601; e-mail: scohen@icisf.org; internet: <http://www.icisf.org/8WC>

FIRST INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON GEO-INFORMATION FOR DISASTER MANAGEMENT: This conference will take place in Delft, the Netherlands, from 21-23 March 2005. For more information, contact: Elfriede Fendel, Delft University of Technology; tel: +31-15-2784548; fax: +31-15-2784422; e-mail: e.fendel@otb.tudelft.nl; internet: <http://www.gdmc.nl/gi4dm>

COASTAL ENGINEERING 2005 – THE SEVENTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MODELING, MEASUREMENTS, ENGINEERING AND MANAGEMENT OF SEAS AND COASTAL REGIONS: This meeting will be held in Algarve, Portugal, from 13-15 April 2005. For more information, contact: Rachel Green, Wessex Institute of Technology; tel: +44-238-0293223; fax: +44-238-029-2853; e-mail: rgreen@wessex.ac.uk; internet: <http://www.wessex.ac.uk/conferences/2005/coastal2005>

SECOND ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR CRISIS RESPONSE AND MANAGEMENT (ISCRAM2005): This conference will take place in Brussels, Belgium, from 18-20 April 2005. For more information, contact: ISCRAM Secretariat; tel: +31-13-466-2018; fax: +31-13-466-3069; e-mail: iscram2005@uvt.nl; internet: <http://www.iscram.org/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=243&Itemid=2>

16TH GLOBAL WARMING INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE: This conference will be held in New York, NY, US, from 19-21 April 2005. For more information, contact: James Roberts, GWXVI International Programme Committee; tel: +1-630-910-1551; fax: +1-630-910-1561; e-mail: jroberts@globalwarming.net; internet: <http://www.globalwarming.net>

CONFERENCE ON SOLUTIONS TO COASTAL DISASTERS 2005: This meeting will convene in Charleston, South Carolina, US, from 8-11 May 2005. For more information, contact: American Society of Civil Engineers; tel: +1-703-295-6300; fax: +1-703-295-6144; e-mail: conferences@asce.org; internet: <http://www.asce.org/conferences/cd05>

14TH WORLD CONGRESS ON DISASTER AND EMERGENCY MEDICINE: This congress will meet in Edinburgh, UK, from 16-20 May 2005. For more information, contact: Concorde Services; tel: +44-141-331-0123; fax: +44-141-331-0123; e-mail: info@wcdem2005.org; internet: <http://www.wcdem2005.org>

FIRST ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE EL NIÑO PHENOMENON AND ITS GLOBAL IMPACT: This conference will be held in Guayaquil, Ecuador, from 16-20 May 2005. For more information, contact: European Geosciences Union; tel: +49-5556-1440; fax: +49-5556-4709; e-mail: egu@copernicus.org; internet: <http://www.copernicus.org/EGU/topconf/avh1>

22ND SESSIONS OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODIES TO THE UNFCCC: The 22nd sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change will be held from 16-27 May 2005, in Bonn, Germany. For more information, contact: UNFCCC Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-1000; fax: +49-228-815-1999; e-mail: secretariat@unfccc.int; internet: <http://unfccc.int>

TIEMS 12TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE: Sponsored by the International Emergency Management Society, this meeting will take place in Torshavn, Faroe Islands, Denmark, from 24-27 May 2005. For more information, contact: Rógvi Finnsson Johansen, TIEMS International Councilor; tel: +298-353030; fax: +298 351301; e-mail: Rogvi.Johansen@tiems.org; internet: <http://www.tiems.org>

12TH REGIONAL DISASTER MANAGERS CONFERENCE: This conference will be held in Lae, Papua New Guinea, from 7-9 June 2005. For more information, contact: South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission; tel: +679-338-1377; fax: +679-337-0040; e-mail: kata@sopac.org; internet: <http://www.sopac.org/tiki/tiki-index.php?page=12th+Regional+Disasters+Managers+Meeting>

31ST INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON REMOTE SENSING OF ENVIRONMENT (ISRSE) – GLOBAL MONITORING FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND SECURITY: This symposium will be held in Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation, from 20-24 June 2005. For more information, contact: ISRSE Secretariat; tel: +1-520-621-8567; fax: +1-520-621-8567; e-mail: isrse@email.arizona.edu; internet: <http://www.niersc.spb.ru/isrse>

15TH WORLD CONFERENCE ON DISASTER MANAGEMENT: This conference will take place from 10-13 July 2005, in Toronto, Canada. For more information, contact: Alysone Will, Conference Coordinator; tel: +1-416-595-1414 ext.224; fax: +1-416-979-1819; e-mail: coord@wcdm.org; internet: http://www.wcdm.org/wcdm_prog14.html

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON DISASTER REDUCTION – CONNECTING GOVERNMENTS, RELIEF ORGANIZATIONS AND THE CORPORATE WORLD: This conference will be held from 16-18 November 2005, in Mumbai, India. For more information, contact: Satya Swaroop, New Media Communication; tel: +91-22-2851-6690; fax: +91-22-2851-5279; e-mail: satya@newmediacomm.biz; internet: <http://www.newmediacomm.com>