



WCDR HIGHLIGHTS: FRIDAY, 21 JANUARY 2005

On Friday, delegates to the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) continued to meet in sessions of the Intergovernmental and Thematic Segments. In Plenary, the Conference addressed the Review of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World, and heard general statements by countries and intergovernmental and other organizations. The Main Committee addressed the draft Hyogo declaration, and continued discussing the draft framework for action. In the Thematic Segment, the final panel was convened on preparedness for effective response, and fourteen sessions of the thematic clusters were held throughout the day.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL SEGMENT

PLENARY: Review of the Yokohama Strategy: ISDR Director Sálvano Briceño introduced the Review of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World (A/CONF.206/L.1) prepared by the Secretariat based on input from the IATF, governments, international organizations and NGOs during the WCDR preparatory process.

BANGLADESH stressed the need to develop a time-bound action plan. IRAN called for a follow-up mechanism and a shift from a post-disaster to pre-disaster focus. SENEGAL stressed the lack of adequate financial resources for disaster prevention programmes in Africa. INDIA emphasized an insurance system for disasters. CAMBODIA asked donors to reallocate funds to disaster risk reduction. SYRIA proposed establishing a global fund to support the implementation of disaster risk reduction programmes.

Briceño said that all comments would be forwarded to the discussion on the draft framework for action. Delegates commended the Secretariat and its partners on the quality of 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.

MAIN COMMITTEE: Delegates discussed the draft declaration, completing negotiations in the early afternoon. A revised version of the draft framework for action was also addressed, with negotiations continuing into the night.

Draft declaration: In the preambular paragraphs, delegates agreed to refer to the Special ASEAN Leaders' Meeting on the Aftermath of the Sumatra Earthquake and Tsunami held in Jakarta, Indonesia, on 6 January 2005. The status of the Common Statement of the special session on the Indian Ocean disaster held on Thursday was discussed, with many delegates noting that the Statement is an outcome of the meeting combining several initiatives, not the President's statement. Delegates agreed to note the relevance to other regions of lessons learned from the

Indian Ocean disaster, and to commend the efforts by affected governments and the international community to respond to the disaster.

On the impact of disasters on sustainable development, COLOMBIA proposed additional language to reflect that development investments that fail to consider disaster risks can increase vulnerability. Following informal discussion, delegates agreed. On the chapeau, the EU proposed adding a reference to the "central" role of the UN in the coordination of humanitarian assistance and disaster preparedness. After lengthy discussion, delegates agreed to describe the role as "vital." CUBA, supported by INDIA and ZIMBABWE, and opposed by JAPAN, the EU and US, proposed deleting reference to good governance. CHINA suggested compromise language referring to the importance of cooperation, partnership and good governance at all levels. The EU added "solidarity" to the list. The chapeau was agreed with the amendments.

Delegates then discussed the operative paragraphs, agreeing to an EU proposal describing disasters as a "challenge to sustainable development," rather than a "development issue." On the responsibility of States in disaster reduction and the need to enhance capacity of vulnerable countries, AOSIS asked to add a reference to SIDS. BANGLADESH, with BARBADOS and BENIN, asked for focus on "disaster-prone developing countries" instead, particularly LDCs. On the importance of translating the framework into concrete actions at all levels, INDIA asked for consistency with the draft framework, so that the paragraph refers to the need to develop indicators, instead of defining specific targets. SWITZERLAND, opposed by AUSTRALIA, CHINA and the US, favored the development of defined targets. Delegates agreed to recognize the need to develop indicators and to strengthen disaster reduction activities appropriate to particular circumstances and capacities as part of the effort to realize the expected outcome and goals of the framework for action.

On realization of WCDR outcomes, BRAZIL and INDIA, opposed by JAPAN and the US, requested the deletion of "shared responsibility and investment," and the EU asked to add "strong political will." INDIA suggested the addition of "shared vision." Delegates agreed on text combining the above suggestions.

Draft framework for action: NEW ZEALAND introduced language on SIDS related to the implementation of the outcome of the Mauritius Strategy for the further implementation of the BPOA, through effective EW systems and other mitigation and response measures. Delegates agreed on an amended text.

On implementation and follow-up, delegates approved a compromise text, introduced by Benin, calling for supporting LDCs as a matter of priority in the framework's implementation, including through financial and technical assistance for disaster



risk reduction. NIGERIA introduced compromise text stressing obstacles to Africa's efforts to achieve sustainable development, especially in view of the region's insufficient capacities to deal with disasters. Delegates agreed to the text, which replaces previous wording on an African risk observatory.

The US offered compromise text on regional and international cooperation in assessing and monitoring regional and transboundary hazards, exchanging information and providing EW through appropriate arrangements, such as those relating to the management of river basins. MEXICO suggested wording to include other transboundary problems. Delegates agreed to the text as amended. On post-conflict communities, delegates agreed to a US proposal to expand the scope of relief and recovery activities to "post-conflict situations in disaster-prone countries," and to remove the other reference to conflict. JAPAN, supported by the US and CANADA, continued to oppose the EU's text on the political determination of "donor governments" to mobilize resources. NEW ZEALAND suggested "development partners," but delegates agreed to refer to "governments." After a lengthy discussion of reference to a review of the framework for action, delegates agreed on compromise text noting that the implementation of the framework for action "will be reviewed."

Under States' tasks for implementation and follow up, CUBA withdrew his proposal to avoid any unilateral measures that impede States' effective disaster preparedness, response and mitigation. Numerous delegates supported Cuba's position, and commended the motion's spirit of compromise. On the development of indicators, SWEDEN introduced compromise text encouraging consultation with relevant UN agencies to develop generic, realistic and measurable indicators for assessing States' implementation, and their refinement at the national level. Discussion continued well into the night in an effort to conclude negotiations on this issue, resource mobilization and other outstanding points. Delegates agreed on references to climate change, including retaining the reference in the preamble.

THEMATIC SEGMENT

THEMATIC CLUSTERS: Cluster 5 Panel: Preparedness for effective response: This panel 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 for taking 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, Assistant Emergency Relief Coordinator and UN/OCHA Director, 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 1: Local governance – preconditions for effective disaster risk reduction: This session 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 between government agencies.

Cluster 4: Disaster prevention functions and disaster-resistant sustainable livelihoods: This session 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 reconstruction efforts to 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 of 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 Malalgoda Ariyabandu, Programme Team Leader, ITDG South Asia, 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.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Friday began with the Bureau taking a hard look at the increasingly complicated drafting process, and expressing concern that the Conference might finish late. However, even given the exorbitant amount of time spent on negotiating certain paragraphs in the Main Committee, by the end of the evening there was cautious optimism that the Conference would deliver its outcomes on time, especially following agreement on the climate change issue. Some delegates were heard commenting approvingly that the need for joint action in the face of real disaster had contributed to constructive attitudes and an atmosphere of flexibility.