



Towards a Global Early Warning System

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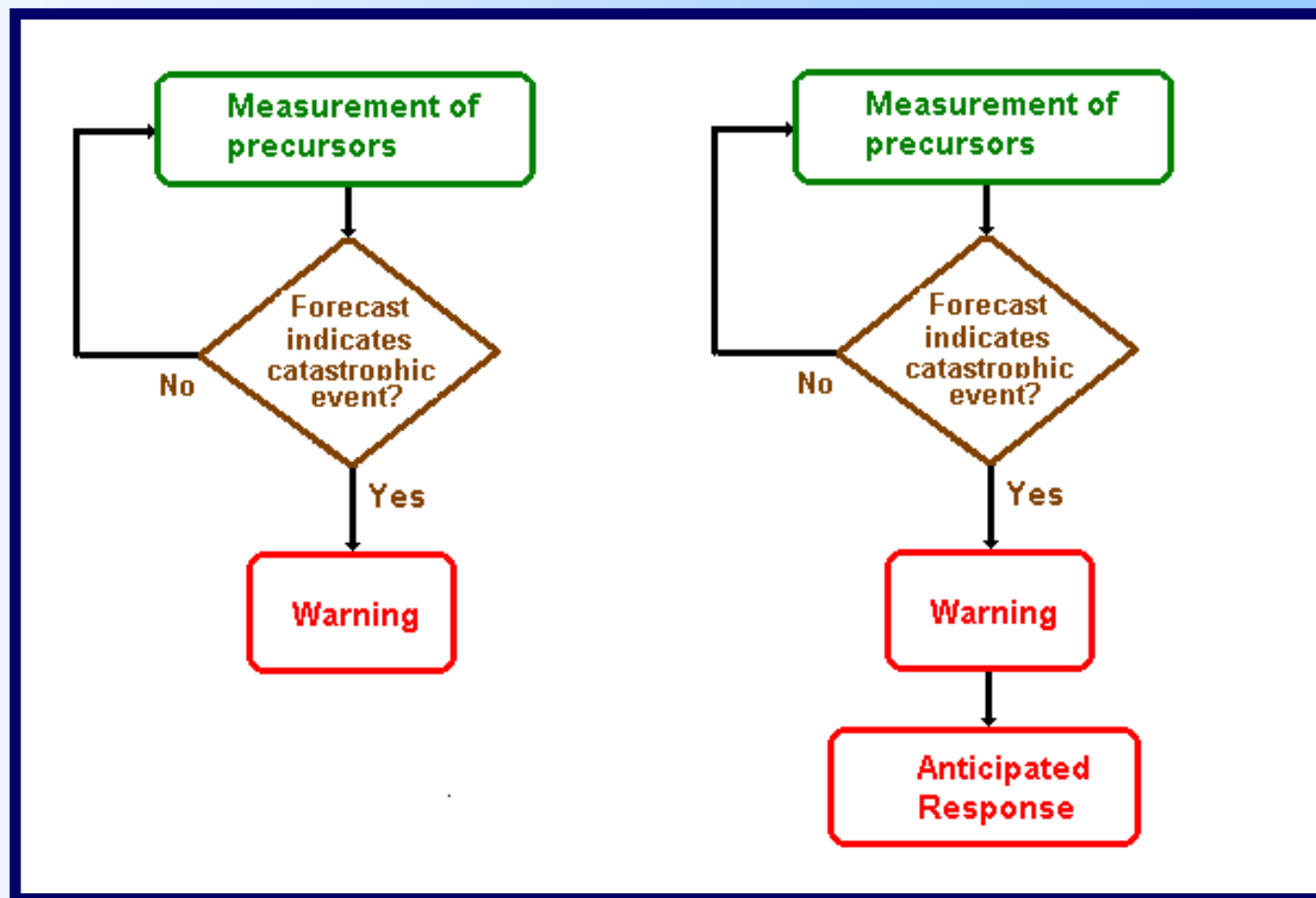


EWS – a basic framework

When surveying early warning systems, one finds two alternate views.

The traditional view, usually employed by technical agencies, focusing on 3 elements.

A more modern view incorporating a fourth element: an anticipated response to the warning.





UN-SG calls for a Global Early Warning System:

Considering the impact of the 26 December 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean, the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, called for the establishment of a ***Global Early Warning System***. Such a system should be built upon existing national and regional capacities.

If such a system is to be designed and implemented, it is important to review some aspects in the context of early warning:





Some issues to consider: *hazards*

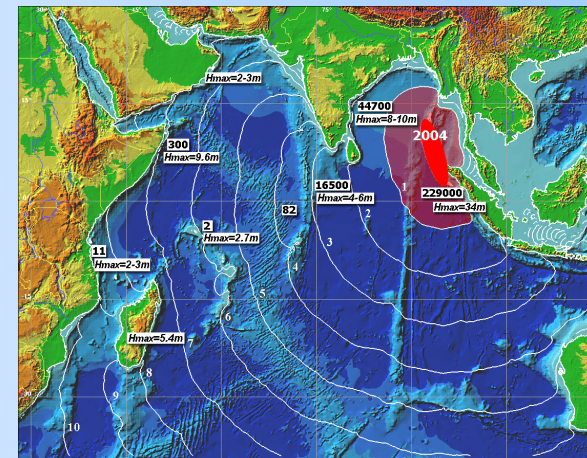
Type of hazards in terms of their geographical span

Intercontinental:
tsunamis, locust, bird-flu.

Continental:
Hurricanes or typhoons, tsunamis,
locust, bird-flu.

National:
Earthquakes, eruptions, epidemic
outbreaks.

Local:
Landslides, eruptions, harmful
algae bloom, etc.





Some issues to consider: *warning or alert levels*

Alert levels for different types of hazards: terms

Floods:	{ Advisory-Watch-Warning (US-NOAA) Watch-Warning-All Clear (UK) Warning, Danger, Severe Danger (Bangladesh). }
Eruptions:	{ Normal-Advisory-Watch-Warning (USGS) Vigilance-Alert 1, Alert 2, Eruption (La Reunion) White, Green, Yellow, Red (Colombia) Green, Yellow, Orange, Red (Central America) }
Cyclones, Hurricanes, Typhoons:	{ Advisory-Watch-Warning (US-NOAA) Advisory-Alert (Japan-JMA) Pre-cyclone watch-alert-warning-post-landfall outlook (India) PSW-1, PSW-2, PSW-3, PSW-4 (Philippines) }
Food insecurity	{ No alert, watch, warning, emergency (FEWSNET, US-AID) Countries w/ unfavourable prospects, countries in crisis (FAO) }



Some issues to consider: *warnings*

Which agency or which authority has the mandate (responsibility) to issue a warning?

In some countries, Meteorological Offices have the authority to issue warnings

In other countries, only elected authorities such as the President, a Provincial Governor or a Major has the authority to issue a warning which can be followed by a public evacuation.

Can an international organization like the UN issue a „warning“ or just an „advisory“?



Proposed directions:



Efforts should proceed initially in the following directions::

- Systematize the experiences of WMO, UNESCO-IOC, FAO, WHO, and similar agencies which already operate early warning systems for inter-continental or continental-level hazards.
- Recognize the variety of terms and levels employed with respect to warnings and alerts depending on the time or impact of an event and/or its magnitude.
- Identify and discuss the issue of mandates or authorities to issue warnings within countries, and the proper way forward.

Discussions should then take place to outline how to proceed.