



## **WCDRR HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 17 MARCH 2015**

Negotiations at the third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR) gathered pace in Sendai, Japan, as delegates worked in informal drafting groups aiming to finalize the post-2015 framework for DRR for adoption at the end of the conference on Wednesday. Meanwhile, a high-level partnership dialogue took place in the morning on “Inclusive DRM: Governments, Communities and Groups,” and a ministerial roundtable convened on public investment strategies for DRR in the afternoon. Several working sessions also took place on food security and disaster-resilient agriculture, children and youth, and the participation of persons with disabilities in inclusive DRR.

Country delegations continued their delivery of formal statements in a general exchange of views that included accounts of disaster impacts and DRR strategies, development of legislative frameworks and education as a key component of national DRR strategies.

### **MAIN COMMITTEE**

The Main Committee convened informally in the morning, after having engaged in detailed textual discussions until 3 am on Tuesday morning.

Delegates noted that implementation of the post-2015 framework for DRR would require UNISDR to be significantly “more activist” in future, especially in relation to interacting with other sustainable development processes, but that UNISDR currently had limited resources compared with many other UN agencies.

Delegates discussed possible review processes for the post-2015 framework for DRR, including the UN General Assembly’s integrated and coordinated follow-up processes to UN conferences and summits, potentially involving one or more of ECOSOC, the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and the quadrennial comprehensive policy review. Margareta Wahlström, UNISDR, said UNISDR’s existing reporting approaches would be the basis for complying with broader UN review processes.

Delegates also discussed the timing of periodic reviews of progress, and developing country delegates noted that continuing to conduct biennial reviews would involve significant resources.

Delegates discussed establishment of an open-ended intergovernmental expert working group to develop possible indicators to measure progress in DRR. Developing country delegates expressed concern about the potential resource implications and the need for balanced representation. Developed country delegates suggested the experts be appointed by governments, and that the UNISDR Scientific and Advisory Group (STAG) should support the group with technical advice.

At mid-day, the Co-Chairs circulated two non-papers for discussion, capturing the Main Committee’s discussions of key unresolved issues contained in the preambular text, description of the expected outcome and goal of the framework, and guiding principles, as well as paragraphs on international cooperation and technology transfer.

In the afternoon, the Committee reconvened and decided to continue “informal informal” negotiations on the main unresolved issues in two working groups with twelve countries represented in each: one group on climate change and international cooperation, and the other on technology transfer and other issues. The working groups continued discussions late into the night.

### **HIGH-LEVEL PARTNERSHIP DIALOGUE**

**Inclusive Disaster Risk Management - Governments, Communities And Groups Acting Together:** Noel Arcsott, Minister of Local Government & Community Development, Jamaica, chaired the session, while Veronica Pedrosa, media correspondent, moderated. Anote Tong, President, Kiribati, delivered a keynote speech, noting the need to establish DRR legislation and overcome international bureaucracy in accessing global funds for DRR and climate change.

Laila Iskander, Minister of Urban Renewal and Informal Settlements, Egypt, underlined the role of NGOs as trust-builders between the government and local communities. Fatimatou Abdel Malick, Mayor of Teveragh-Zeina, Mauritania, emphasized the need to preserve the rights of communities.

Nicola Valluzzi, President of the Province of Potenza, Italy, highlighted work in building resilience at the local level, stressing the need to consider cultural attitudes to risk management in DRR policymaking.

Anthony Lake, Executive Director, UNICEF, called for children in vulnerable communities to be involved in assessing risk, citing examples of youth involved in disaster mapping, reconstruction and restoration efforts in Nepal, Brazil and Japan.

Underscoring the need to “leave no one behind,” Carlos Kaiser Mansilla, ONG Inclusiva, proposed inclusion standards for DRR. Josephine Basibas Castillo, Damayan ng Maralitang Pilipinong Api Inc., the Philippines, said involving grassroots communities in DRR planning and implementation reduces corruption in projects and programmes and facilitates scaling up of DRR solutions.

Participants commented on, *inter alia*: creating a “partnership of equals” between researchers and local communities; building virtual inclusive DRR communities; and encouraging media to be proactive in providing accurate information as a part of DRR efforts.

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**MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE**

**Public Investment Strategies for DRR:** Raed Arafat, Secretary of State, Department of Emergency Situations, Romania, chaired the event.

Speakers gave examples of national actions, including the establishment of dedicated funds, making use of tax revenue, and allowing a percentage of public investment to be spent on DRR. Participants highlighted the importance of transforming institutional arrangements, for example, by harmonizing funds for climate change and DRR, as well as guiding investments to areas in most need through disaster mapping.

Egypt described three sources of funds for DRR investments: property registration fees for residents of informal settlements who have already invested money in their dwellings; domestic banks; and national budget allocations. El Salvador called for eliminating corruption in the construction industry as part of disaster prevention measures. Vietnam and several other developing countries noted their limited resources for public investment and expressed their need for international support for DRR investment, including through ODA. The East African Community noted its emphasis on investing in, or promoting private sector investment in high quality infrastructure, including through tax incentives. Uzbekistan has put in place a programme aimed at technical and educational measures to address earthquake vulnerability at the local community level. Cabo Verde noted the difficulties faced by small, poorer countries in preparing for severe disaster events, highlighting it has suffered a volcanic eruption for the last three months, destroying infrastructure.

The World Meteorological Organization noted that over the last five years, 90% of disasters have been caused or aggravated by weather and water, the impacts of which could have been significantly ameliorated through better early warning systems (EWS), which generate a very high return on public investment. The UN Economic Commission for Europe noted that cross-sectoral approaches to assessing projects, which also involve finance ministries, will have a better chance of obtaining public funding. Youth Beyond Disasters called for greater public investment in technology. A Palestinian local government participant called for the opening of borders during disaster events.

**WORKING SESSIONS**

**Food security, disaster-resilient agriculture and nutrition:** Amir Abdulla, Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme (WFP), moderated the session.

Dominique Burgeon, Director, Emergency and Rehabilitation Division, FAO, highlighted the need to strengthen DRR planning in agriculture and improve EWS on extreme weather and food insecurity. Amb. Shameem Ahsan, Bangladesh, presented national measures to improve crop diversity, resistance to pests and storage systems. David Farrell, Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology, Barbados, recounted efforts to strengthen EWS, including through structures that ensure information is delivered. He highlighted the work of the Global Framework for Climate Services, and the regional Climate Outlook Forums that develop weather, health and agriculture scenarios for the Caribbean.

Other speakers explained how resilience measures had served to mitigate the impacts of floods and drought, with examples from Ethiopia, Kenya and Namibia, also noting Kenya's establishment of a National Drought Management Authority.

**Children and Youth – Don't Decide My Future Without Me:** Ahmad Alhendawi, UN Special Envoy for Youth, moderated this session, inviting children and youth to showcase their aspirations and actions to advance an ambitious DRR agenda. Keynote speaker Anthony Lake, Director-General, UNICEF, said that children and youth are part of the solution for coping with disasters. He highlighted the importance of school safety and

measures such as swimming lessons as practical steps towards effective DRR. Children and youth representatives called for new avenues to participate in decision making. Themes raised in the debate included: budget allocation for youth engagement; importance of youth in volunteering; global solidarity; and inter-generational equity and links to human rights. Alhendawi concluded the session stating that children and youth must be perceived as “an asset to save the future.”

**Proactive Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Inclusive DRR for All:** Monthian Buntan, UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, moderated the session.

Yohei Sasakawa, Chairman, The Nippon Foundation, Japan, expressed hope that accomplishments at the WCDRR will help to advance disability inclusiveness in global development including the SDGs.

Setareki Macanawai, Chair, Pacific Disability Forum, Fiji, called for the implementation of multi-hazard and multi-sectoral disability-inclusive DRR policies.

Underlining the importance of planning “with” and not “for” communities, Marcie Roth, Federal Emergency Management Agency, US, stressed that the role of people living with disabilities must not be “tokenized.”

Satoko Akiyama, Bethel's House, Japan, performed a role play demonstrating a process of developing early warning messages with people with disabilities, as well as those with post-traumatic stress disorder, schizophrenia and depression.

Sonia Margarita, The World Federation of the Deaf Blind, called for government support for measures including educating children on communicating with the deaf-blind.

Paul Njoroge, Senator, Kenya, lamented that only 16% of people with disabilities in his country held paid employment, which, he stressed, deepened their vulnerability.

In closing, Zanda Kalniņa-Lukaševica, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Latvia, highlighted the efforts made by the EU in creating a disability-inclusive regional DRR framework.

**IN THE CORRIDORS**

Tensions ran high on Tuesday morning in the Main Committee, as delegates resumed discussions after a very late night. The mood was sufficiently overcast to prompt the host country to make an appeal from the podium, urging delegates to show “the spirit of compromise” to enable the post-2015 framework for DRR to be agreed and a political declaration to be crafted. While most remained confident of agreement being reached by Wednesday, the slow pace of progress on sensitive text led one delegate to make “a firm prediction of an all-nighter” for already weary delegates.

Commenting on the relatively intense politicization of the DRR process at this conference, one delegate sighed, “If this was being held after the SDGs and the climate COP, instead of beforehand, it would be so much easier.” Another, however, welcomed the sudden injection of new energy through the leadership of countries that are “politically far apart,” but united in their ambition to move the process forward. While some countries protested that they did not feel represented by the newly formed drafting groups, the majority seemed willing to fall in line with some delegations' calls for a greater level of trust and goodwill. They were encouraged, in this, by the appearance of roses in the meeting room, flown in courtesy of one of the negotiating countries. With the hosts having generously provided dinner in anticipation of a long night, delegates hunkered down to thrash out their differences.

**ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS:** The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of the third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction will be available on Saturday, 21 March 2015 online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/isdr/wcdr3/>