



GP09 Daily

Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction
Second Session, Geneva, Switzerland
16 – 19 June 2009



Informal highlights from today's events at the Second Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

Thursday 18 June 2009

Kofi Annan launches Weather Info for All initiative at Global Platform

The Global Platform was honoured to receive former UN Secretary-General and, now President of the Global Humanitarian Forum (GHF) Kofi Annan to launch an exciting meteorological initiative for Africa.

Joining him on the podium for this well attended event were: Carl-Henric Svanberg, President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Ericsson, Michel Jarraud, Secretary-General, World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), Lord Simon Cairns, Chairman of Zain, Margareta Wahlstrom, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction and Walter Fust, GHF CEO. Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Earth Institute at Colombia University also spoke by video link.

This major worldwide announcement centres on the deployment of up to 5,000 automatic weather stations in mobile network sites across Africa, where less than 300 are reporting today. The project will increase the dissemination of weather information via mobile phones to users and communities, including remote farmers and fishermen. The first 19 stations already in place have more than doubled weather monitoring in the Lake Victoria region, where 5,000 people die every year due to storms and accidents

In his speech, Kofi Annan told the Platform: "Africa has a network eight times below the WMO minimum recommended standard, and less than 200 weather stations that meet WMO observation requirements, compared to several thousand each in Europe, North America, and parts of Asia. The 5,000 weather stations will be installed at new and existing mobile network sites throughout the continent over coming years, in what promises to save lives and bring increased economic opportunity to tens of millions of people."

Added Michel Jarraud: "We see the Weather Info for All initiative as a major pan-African effort to empower our 188 Members to provide enhanced weather information and services. Working through National Meteorological and Hydrological Services, WMO will identify weather information needs, advise on technical requirements and help disseminate the information. This initiative may prove to be one of the most important for African meteorology in decades."

In her remarks, Margareta Wahlstrom said the initiative "moves beyond the theoretical and puts into action precisely what it seeks to do – the establishment and deployment of a series of automated weather stations across Africa".

Film Debate is a blockbuster

More than 150 participants attended a thought-provoking film debate last night moderated by Edward Girardet, a respected media figure from Media21. Five panelists, including Franny Armstrong, Director of 'The Age of Stupid' discussed how to enhance the interaction between the film/news industry and leading organizations dealing with climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster management to increase CCA visibility which is very limited today in film productions.

Eight short films were presented during the session, among them a short trailer of 'An Inconvenient Truth' and a CCA film shot in Burkina Faso produced by Christian Aid. After identifying a number of challenges due to their formats and audiences, film-makers and experts agreed it was important to work more closely to make more films on the solutions offered by CCA.

Film-makers suggested that experts should let them produce professional films in simple terms that are more appropriate to their audiences and focus on bringing expert knowledge to enrich the content of their current productions instead of producing films that have little chance to be broadcast or distributed.

Safer schools construction guidance notes unveiled

Today's high-level plenary on safer schools and hospitals witnessed the release of the "Guidance Notes on Safer School Construction" by Zoubida Allaoua, Director, World Bank. The Guidance Notes were developed jointly with the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, the World Bank and ISDR

The Notes provide a framework of guiding principles and general steps to develop a context-specific plan to address a critical gap to reaching the Education for All and Millennium Development Goals through the disaster resilient construction and retrofitting of school buildings.

The landmark document briefly addresses the need and rationale for safer school buildings; recommends a series of suggested steps that highlight key points that should be considered when planning a safer school construction and/or retrofitting initiative; and identifies basic design principles and requirements a school building must meet to provide a greater level of protection. Finally, the Notes offer a list of key resources for more detailed, technical and context-specific information.

Indonesian minister's key announcement

In a dinner speech among the Indonesian delegation to the Global Platform hosted by the Southeast Asian country's Geneva mission, Minister Asiz co-chair of the budget committee of the Indonesian House of Representatives announced his intention to convene an urgent meeting between Parliament, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Environment and the BNPB (national agency in charge of DRM) on his return to Jakarta.

His goal is to obtain concrete suggestions on how to set targets for DRR funding and how to harmonize DRR-CCA funding for the country's next five year plan, due to be finalized this September. He also requested suggestions from delegates on how best to convince the rest of his colleagues in Parliament.

Meetings' round up

Principal proposed solutions, plans and commitments from today's Platform meetings include:

- The Plenary supported draft proposals presented for the adoption of targets for Safer Schools and Hospitals. Several recommendations were made to ISDR partners including the establishment of a global thematic platform for health and continued investment in safer hospitals.
- A draft White Paper recommending the compilation of an in-depth global fire inventory will be consolidated and submitted to the IPCC as a case study for the IPCC Special Report. .
- The absence of ecosystems management considerations from the climate change negotiations agenda is a serious gap. It was recommended that ISDR, UNEP, IUCN and WWF should develop a joint policy paper ahead of the Copenhagen negotiations to put forward a convincing case to policy makers and negotiators regarding the importance of including ecosystems management in the negotiations. The policy paper should be backed by relevant scientific evidence.
- A group of countries proposed that the climate change adaptation funds should finance a fixed percentage (30%) of the weather and climate related risk reduction projects undertaken by developing countries.
- Representatives from national platforms agreed on recommendations addressed to nations, the USG and ISDR system partners. These will be delivered to the Plenary on Friday.
- The Costa Rican parliament will host a regional parliamentary consultation on DRR and climate change adaptation in 2009.
- Central African consultation will be hosted by Chad and supported by ISDR and the African parliamentary group in 2009.
- The Mediterranean Assembly in partnership with ISDR and other parliamentary networks may organize a global parliamentary meeting to further increase understanding among parliamentarians on DRR in the context of socio-economic development.
- The New Zealand Government called upon UNISDR and ISDR System to prioritize capacity building in small island states and developing countries

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