



GP09 Daily

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

Friday 19 June 2009

Global Platform ends with call to halve disaster related deaths by 2015

The Second Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction concluded today with participants from some 300 regional/national organizations and governments urging political leaders to implement measures to halve the number of deaths from natural hazard by 2015.

In the Chair's Summary at the closing ceremony, John Holmes, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Chair of the ISDR partnership recognised the way in which the process of disaster risk reduction (DRR) was being driven from the local level with the leadership increasingly coming from the global south.

Specific targets were also identified – reflecting the conference's deliberations – as catalysts for cutting deaths and economic losses brought on by disasters, including:

- By 2010, establishment of clear national and international financial commitments to DRR, for example to allocate a minimum of 10% of all humanitarian and reconstruction funding, at least 1% of development funding, and at least 30% of climate change adaptation funding to DRR.
- By 2011, a global structural evaluation of all schools and hospitals and by 2015 firm action plans for safer schools and hospitals developed and implemented in all disaster prone countries with DRR included in all school curricula by the same year.
- By 2015, all major cities in disaster prone areas to include and enforce DRR measures in their building and land use codes.

In his Summary, Mr Holmes reviewed the findings and recommendations from four days of intense dialogue and debate among the Platform's 1,800 participants, drawn from plenary and informal plenary sessions, five high-level panels, five round-tables and over 40 special events.

Expanding on the main Platform theme – *Invest Today for a Safer Tomorrow* – he stressed: “At present the scope of activities to reduce disaster risks is often simply too small and suffers from limited institutional capacities, lack of skills and established tools and small budgets. Put bluntly, many countries must dedicate more funds from national budgets – or suffer the consequences. This is also a must for the international community.”

Said Margareta Wahlstrom, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction: “It is clear that participants are leaving the Global Platform today with high expectations. The targets specified this morning are simply a first step – delivery must follow rapidly.”

She also welcomed a joint statement from the six members of the ISDR management oversight board, delivered at the closing ceremony, inviting Governments to make 2010 ‘the year of investment and action’.

Closing ceremony keynote speaker David Nabarro, UN System Coordinator on Avian and Human Influenza and the Global Food Security Crisis, stressed the importance of making pandemic preparedness an integral part of DRR planning and identified a number of factors that are essential to such preparedness: political commitment to sustain efforts; inter-sectoral working capacity; and well-planned communications strategies.

Dr Nabarro warned that as the current swine flu pandemic evolves and spreads to other countries, particularly poorer countries, governments and national health authorities needs to make sure they are as ready as possible.

Parliamentarians meet

Parliamentarians from Argentina, Austria, Cambodia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Finland, Indonesia, Kenya, Namibia, the Philippines, Senegal, Turkey, and Uganda, together with Globe Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, met in closed session yesterday.

The main objective of the gathering was to share information, experiences, and ideas on the role and responsibility of parliamentarians in reducing the risk of disasters and the impact of climate change.

The group fully recognized the important role parliamentarians can play in steering the integration of DRR into development and climate change adaptation planning through their legislative work, shaping both policies and budgetary allocations. It was acknowledged too that they can also be the dynamic drivers to bridge the existing gap in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters, at national, regional and local level.

Communicating the Global Platform

“The communications activity at the Global Platform was truly a ‘One UN’ effort,” says Brigitte Leoni, UNISDR’s Head of Communications (Ag). In addition to a small core team from the UNISDR secretariat, Ms Leoni was able to call on support from WMO, UNDP and a range of professional counterparts in the ISDR system.

In total this group, handled seven press conferences, a Global Platform-related complement of six press releases, five GP09 Dailies and numerous media enquiries which delivered more than 140 Global Platform ‘hits’ linked via the conference’s websites.

The PreventionWeb team were equally busy, posting some 130 statements, reports, news items and the like during the week as well as overseeing the popular Platform market-place.

Our Children as Disaster Risk Reduction Teachers!

Through the week, the Global Platform market-place was fast-paced and focused on the disaster risk reduction activities of a host of varied organizations. Among some 30 stalls was the ISDR’s display highlighting the need to educate people – and particularly children – about the need for disaster prevention.

Schools must be designed and constructed to withstand natural hazards, and disaster risk reduction should be part of every school curriculum, emphasized UNICEF Communications officer Charlotte Perrot:

“Children can learn about natural hazards, when and where they are most likely to occur, and what to do before, during and after disasters strike, and they can start to learn about this at school,” she added. “It is essential as well to mobilise children as the present and future voice of disaster risk reduction.”

A team effort

For Global Platform senior coordinator Sharon Rusu, today’s closing ceremony concluded months of work for a small dedicated UNISDR team in preparing for and then running the Platform.

“Since we moved into top gear at the start of the year, the effort has been relentless and colleagues in the coordination team have shown huge commitment to the task in hand.”

She added: “The wider group of UNISDR staff and volunteers who stepped up to the plate during the event have also given their time and energy generously, to the benefit of the Platform.

“But the even best prepared conference will not succeed without the active involvement of the participants, whom themselves have worked hard this week and contributed to a positive outcome – as articulated in the Chair’s Summary – that I am sure will help drive the DRR imperative over the coming years.”

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IISD Daily Web Coverage: <http://www.iisd.ca/ymb/gpdr2/>.

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