

Media urged to step-up climate change reporting

The media should avoid giving time and space to a small group of scientists denying that global warming is due to human activities, a television news workshop on climate change reporting in Bali, was told.

Andreas Fischlin, a Swiss scientist at the Institute for Terrestrial Ecology (ETHZ) in Zurich said human made climate change due to human activities is real, and it is with us. "We will face a climate change in this century more than what we faced in the last century."

"A lot of people are not aware of how serious the problem is and they need to know the facts. The media should help increase awareness on the issue to better mitigate climate change," added Mr Fischlin.

"It's everybody's tasks. If we do it all in a concentrated effort, we can solve this problem."

Mr Fischlin was one of the speakers at Regional Workshop on News Coverage of Climate Change and Disasters, which ran from 10 to 11 December 2007 on the Indonesian island of Bali. The workshop organised by Asiavision in association with the ABU's Development Projects Department.

Commenting on journalists' responsibilities in mitigating climate change Silvia Llosa, Programme Officer for the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) said climate change is not a hopeless situation and journalists need to understand climate change and the risks and start communicating it to the other.

"Journalists need to inform and educate their audiences about the threats posed by climate change related risks and what they can do to avoid being a victim of a disaster from a climate change related risk," she said.

"When there is a disaster, it provides journalists an opportunity to jump in and say perhaps this can be avoided. We are seeing more hazards at places where it never happened and people are not ready to face this. Journalists should investigate the causes and ask themselves if a government is doing enough to avoid such disasters," added Ms Llosa.

She urged media to investigate on the problem, how is it related to population and how this can be avoided. According to Ms Llosa media need to explain to the public that it is the responsibility of the government to do something to reduce the risks.

She also stressed on the importance of building infrastructure that is resistant to the hazards that we are dealing with. "Some countries don't even have building codes in infrastructure. If we are prone to having floods, we should be building all infrastructures with this hazard in mind. We need to develop a culture of prevention and resilience where we need to be aware of our risks and what we can do to improve the risk."

She told the workshop that governments need to build policies and plans to reduce disaster and invest selectively in critical facilities. "Governments need to identify the critical facilities so when disaster happens we can use them. They also need to plan ahead and make sure that development is not constructed in high risk areas."

A total of 17 broadcast journalists – 15 Asiavision members and 5 ABU members - took part in the workshop, namely RTA (Afghanistan), BTV (Bangladesh), BBS (Bhutan), RTB (Brunei), TVB (Hong Kong), DDI (India), Metro TV (Indonesia), TVRI (Indonesia), IRIB (Iran), RTM (Malaysia), MN 25 (Mongolia), TV5 (Mongolia), CNA (Singapore), MTV (Sri

Lanka), NBT (Thailand), MCOT (Thailand) and RTTL (Timor Leste). The participation of 5 ABU members was made possible through support from the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction.

The workshop looked at various angles in the coverage of climate change and disaster stories, with speakers from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), Red Cross Climate Centre, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The workshop participants also had the opportunity to view the material related to climate change produced by some participating stations.

The workshop was held on the sidelines of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meeting. The UNFCCC meeting was held from 3 December to 15 December 2007 to discuss crucial international climate change deal.

The UNFCCC meeting concluded with a Roadmap on continuing to negotiate towards securing a global agreement around emissions monitoring and mitigation and adaptation efforts. The decision of the meeting includes a clear agenda for key climate change issues to be negotiated up to 2009. These are: action for adapting to the negative consequences of climate change, such as droughts and floods; ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; ways to widely deploy climate-friendly technologies; and financing both adaptation and mitigation measures.

While a new global deal is envisioned for 2013, the UNFCCC meeting also agreed on a number of steps that need to be taken immediately to further implement the existing commitments of the UNFCCC. Four major UNFCCC meetings to implement the Bali roadmap are foreseen for next year, the first to be held in March or April.

The conference was opened by Secretary-General of the United Nations and attended by around 11,000 participants.

Heard at Climate Change Workshop

"I learnt a lot from the workshop. The UN information is extremely useful because as news journalists, I need to find trusted websites and resources to help me with my reporting. I also wish that we have half-day to just view all the clips done by the producers coming to the workshop to get ideas on making our own production."

Mahieash Johnney, MTV-Sri Lanka

"People should have the sense of urgency to take climate change more seriously. Journalists should present the facts as itself, not to alarm people but to let them be aware of what's happening."

Tracey Furniss, TVB-Hong Kong

"I will share all information with my colleagues so we can better report about climate change and also when disasters strike."

Theeraphong Petcharat, NBT-Thailand

"We should get the message across to our reporters on adaptation and mitigation and create awareness on the issue."

Karlina Kioen Margaretha, Metro TV-Indonesia