

**Status of Implementation of Article 4, Paragraph 8 of the Convention, Decision
5/CP.7 and Decision 1/CP.10**

Submission by
**the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Secretariat on
behalf of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction System
to the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Implementation**
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This paper is submitted by the Secretariat of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction on behalf of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) System¹ in response to the Subsidiary Body for Implementation's (SBI) request for views on actions and activities addressing the adverse effects of climate change and to assist in the assessment of the status of implementation of Article 4, paragraph 8 of the Convention, and decisions 5/CP.7 and 1/CP.10.

1. Background

The body of the submission focuses primarily on the status of decision 1/CP.10, paragraph 5 (b) (iv) and in accordance with decision 5/CP.7, paragraphs 7 (b) (vi) and 8 (c); namely, 'building capacity, including institutional capacity, for preventive measures, planning, preparedness and management of disasters relating to climate change, including contingency planning, in particular for droughts and floods and extreme weather events'.

This submission draws upon ongoing efforts to track progress in the implementation of the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters* (Hyogo Framework).

The Hyogo Framework, adopted by Governments in 2005, identified the importance of monitoring and reporting progress in reducing disaster risk as an essential feature of Hyogo Framework implementation. As mandated by the Hyogo Framework, the ISDR System has undertaken a first, comprehensive, biennial review of the status of Hyogo Framework implementation for the period 2007-09. The ISDR System's first Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction will analyse progress and challenges faced in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework's five priorities for action. The Global Assessment Report is being coordinated by the UNISDR Secretariat with support from UNDP, World Bank, Kingdom of Bahrain, and a range of system partners at all levels.

¹ The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) is a *system of partnerships*. These partnerships are composed of a broad range of actors, all of which have essential roles to play in supporting nations and communities to reduce disaster risk. These partners include Governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, international financial institutions, scientific and technical bodies and specialized networks as well as civil society and the private sector.

Over fifty national authorities designated with disaster risk reduction functions have completed interim reports online as of November 2008 with others forthcoming in 2009. While the 2009 Global Assessment Report will provide an in-depth comparative analysis of progress made on the Hyogo Framework's priorities across the regions with an assessment of implications for climate change policies and adaptation activities, the present submission intends to summarise some of the main issues highlighted by national authorities with regard to areas that have direct implications on climate change adaptation in the context of disaster risk reduction.

2. Status of Implementation

This paper focuses on three areas that are commonly agreed to be fundamental building blocks for reducing disaster risk: risk assessment, early warning systems and sector-specific risk reduction plans. These represent immediate and cost-effective measures where action can be taken to advance adaptation to climate change through disaster risk reduction.

Risk assessments. These involve the collection and summary of national risk information, including socio-economic data on existing vulnerability and capacity. They should cover the entire territory and all populations, and should be routinely updated to assess emerging risks including those related to climate change. The information is most often represented in risk maps. It should be made widely available to all relevant users, in order to support policymaking, raise community awareness, and enable populations to reduce their own risks.

Early warning systems. Effective early warning systems involve four elements: risk knowledge, monitoring and warning service, dissemination and communication, and response capability. Early warning systems are highly effective in saving lives and livelihoods. Although all four elements of the system need to be strengthened in many countries, it is the communication of warnings and people's preparedness to act that usually fails in disasters².

Sector-specific risk reduction plans. To be effective, national plans and strategies to reduce disaster risk need to be integrated in the plans and programmes of every sector and area of development. Land-use planning, the locating of critical infrastructure, the management of natural resources, the protection of key assets³—all should ensure that risk is identified and reduced at all stages from planning through to implementation. Key sectors include agriculture, water resources, health, infrastructure development, planning and environment.

² See "Global Survey of Early Warning Systems": An assessment of capacities, gaps and opportunities towards building a comprehensive global early warning system for all natural hazards". United Nations, 2006.

³ For example, see Protecting New Health Facilities from Disasters: Guidelines for the Promotion of Disaster Mitigation, Washington D.C., PAHO/WHO 2003.

2.1 Risk Assessments

“Improving the analysis and identification of risk is crucial in order to provide critical information for risk reduction policy-making and help prioritize risk reduction investments. Indeed, accurate, comparable and appropriately scaled information on disaster losses, hazards, vulnerabilities and risks at the different spatial levels is fundamental for designing and implementing effective policies and programs that reduce disaster risk”.⁴

Some progress is noted in the field of risk assessment at global, regional and national levels, with differences across the regions. Many projects funded through the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), for instance, include risk assessment components. Likewise, many national disaster reduction strategies and action plans feature risk identification as a primary activity. Several countries reported that national climate change strategies and action plans clearly identify the need for further risk assessments; in some cases specific reference is made to the need for sectoral assessments.

New research is underway in many countries, such as New Zealand where the Climate Change Plan of Action programme provides for significant investment in research and development into helping land-based sectors adapt to climate change. In the Philippines, a study of the vulnerability of critical sectors to climate change has just been initiated using the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund of the Spanish government.

Progress in regional cooperation in risk assessment is noted as well. The Cayman Islands, for example, refers to the significant advantage of working in cooperation with the Caribbean Climate Change Center. Both Germany and Sweden have indicated that risk information is now available online and available to the public.

Nevertheless several important gaps are noted. One issue that emerged repeatedly is the **urgent need for local level data**. Governments such as Nepal have noted that while local level hazard mapping has been initiated in a few communities, greater effort is needed to make these more systematic and sustained. In addition, several countries noted specifically that while **some risk information is available but needs to be updated to include further details on climate change impacts**. As the probability of hazard occurrence and the underlying drivers of exposure and vulnerability will continue to change over time, **risk assessment should be seen as an ongoing activity**. As one report suggested, building capacity and technical infrastructure needs to be a continuous exercise covering all levels and sectors. Several countries noted the **need for coordination and sharing of risk information**.

⁴ See Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery website at <http://gfdr.org/index.cfm?Page=Risk%20Assessments&ItemID=29>

Several countries drew attention to the fact that even where **risk information is available; it is not being systematically applied in planning processes or in the design of risk reduction measures.**

2.2 Early Warning Systems

“The objective of people-centred early warning systems is to empower individuals and communities threatened by hazards to act in sufficient time and in an appropriate manner so as to reduce the possibility of personal injury, loss of life, damage to property and the environment and loss of livelihoods”.⁵

Early warning systems are called for in Decision 5/CP.7 paragraph 7 (b) (vii): ‘Strengthening existing and, where needed, establishing early warning systems for extreme weather events in an integrated and interdisciplinary manner to assist developing country Parties, in particular those most vulnerable to climate change’.

Interim country reports on implementation of the Hyogo Framework indicate some progress in strengthening early warning systems. In Africa, for instance, nearly half of the reporting countries participating in the online Hyogo Framework progress review in 2008 reported having early warning systems established for specific hazards in specific geographical areas of the country. In September 2006, the UNISDR released a Global Survey of Early Warning Systems. The report identifies components of effective warning systems (risk knowledge, monitoring and warning services, dissemination and communication, and response capability). The critical issues identified in that report are consistent with the comments received from countries through the Hyogo Framework monitoring system.

- Inadequate political commitment to and responsibility for developing integrated early warning systems, lack of legal frameworks for early warning systems, weak integration of early warning issues in national plans and inadequate recognition of the links between disaster risk reduction and development;
- Insufficient investment in early warning capacities, especially in developing countries where disaster vulnerabilities are often highest;
- Insufficient coordination among actors responsible for early warning, for instance between technical warning issuers and government agencies, at all levels from local to international;
- Lack of participatory approaches, with over-reliance on centralised government direction and limited engagement of civil society, NGOs and the private sector; and
- Inadequate identification and sharing of methodologies and good practices, as well as cross-discipline collaboration to enhance warning capacities both within and between the different hazard fields.

⁵ Global Survey of Early Warning Systems, ISDR 2006 (<http://www.unisdr.org/ppew/info-resources/ewc3/Global-Survey-of-Early-Warning-Systems.pdf>).

2.3 Sector-Specific Risk Reduction Plans

“While governments act to mitigate future climate change, they must also plan and act to address the impacts. This preparation includes risk assessments, prioritization of projects, funding and allocation of both financial and human resources, solution development and implementation, and rapid deployment of information sharing and decision support tools... As such, adaptation is dependent upon numerous stakeholders ... to develop solutions to these complex problems for which prior solutions may not exist. Adaptation planning requires creativity, compromise, and collaboration across agencies, sectors and traditional geographic boundaries.”⁶

Attempts to include climate change adaptation in national disaster risk reduction policies may be found in all regions; however, these efforts are recent and infrequent. While countries have begun to make these links in policy terms and have attained some institutional commitment, in practice countries lack the financial resources, capacities and implementation mechanisms to implement.

Some countries explicitly recognize in their reports that disaster reduction and climate change adaptation measures must be aligned with national socio-economic priorities. In some countries efforts have been taken to initiate changes in national planning legislation; however, in most countries **the need for national institutional frameworks to support the integration of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction** into planning remains an important need. **The need for adequate financial mechanisms** has been identified repeatedly as a significant gap.

Greater commitment to a multi-sectoral and multi-hazard approach was reported in several countries. It is worth noting that several countries indicated that formal institutional linkages have been made between national climate change committee and national platforms for disaster risk reduction; however, these instances are the exception rather than the rule. In most countries, the need for better coordination between climate change and disaster reduction authorities and expertise has been noted.

Local level planning and implementation of those plans is urgently needed. This theme was repeated in many of the country reports. Some countries noted progress such as new guidelines for local level planning and strengthened land-use planning mechanisms; which in at least one case was linked directly to ecological rather than administrative boundaries. The value of these mechanisms for both disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation was noted.

⁶ Adaptation Planning – What U.S. States and Localities are doing. Pew Center on Global Climate Change. 2008. (http://www.pewclimate.org/docUploads/State-Adaption-Planning-02-11-08_0.pdf)

While some countries have noted progress in developing cost-benefit analyses for use in planning, the absence of monitoring and evaluation processes, the lack of clear indicators and weak enforcement have been identified as challenges to integrating climate change into policies, plans and programmes.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

The available relevant country reports on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework reflect a strong body of expertise and experience and point to critical gaps and to the urgent need for scaling up and sharing good practices as a means to support the further implementation of 1/CP.10 and 5/CP.7.

1. The ISDR System utilizes various instruments for monitoring progress at national, regional and global levels; these should inform further SBI discussion on risk, risk reduction, risk management and risk sharing or risk transfer. The soon-to-be released Global Assessment Report will provide a comprehensive overview and a risk baseline from which to prioritize adaptation measures. Its findings should be used to inform UNFCCC processes and decisions.
2. The current advances in risk assessment, early warning and sector-specific planning need to be strengthened substantially. At the same time, more effort is required to shift the focus from the stage of assessing and planning to the next steps of taking action based on risk information and implementing plans. Good practices need to be shared and scaled up, particularly at the local level.
3. Political commitments to risk reduction needs to be followed with financial commitments. Countries have reported growing political commitment but there remains a lack of financial support for implementation.
4. Systematic dialogue and technical meetings between national disaster reduction experts and national climate change authorities would be useful to identify barriers to implementation and incentives for further action. These approaches would help to draw attention to the capacities, tools and experiences already available in countries and to support necessary capacity development.
5. Knowledge gaps need to be addressed; in particular the scientific and technical assessment of the various policies and tools for managing extreme events and the generating of information on the economics of different risk reduction practices.