



Frontline

In contact with our National Focal Points

Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

Delegates from 120 nations participated in the first session of the Global Platform held in Geneva, Switzerland, the 5th to 7th of June 2007. It was convened on the basis of guidance contained in the resolution of the General Assembly on the ISDR that calls for the adoption by governments of the Hyogo Framework and that recognizes the Global Platform as a successor mechanism to the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction. National practitioners and other stakeholders have repeatedly expressed the desire to have a mechanism through which they can exchange their experiences in disaster risk reduction and access information on how other countries addressed particular challenges in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework. The Global Platform has been set up to serve this need, and it is expected to become the main global forum for all parties involved in disaster risk reduction, namely governments, United Nations agencies, international financial institutions, regional bodies, civil society, the private sector, and the scientific and academic communities. The Global Platform provides advocacy for effective action to reduce disaster risks, expands the political space devoted to the issue, and contributes to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals particularly in respect to poverty reduction and environmental sustainability.

Experts among more than 1,000 delegates warned that one single catastrophic disaster could wipe out decades of development investment, as well as claim thousands of lives and impose a heavy economic burden upon the survivors. The platform also gave a strong voice to a wide range of non-governmental organizations involved in emergency relief, development, and education. "For the first time," said Mr. John Holmes¹, "everybody – the UN, the NGOs, the private sector, academic institutions, disaster experts and local authorities – are working together. Disaster risk reduction is everybody's business." Among the initiatives launched at the Global Platform are the Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (CADRI) which will unite three UN agencies and bring new expertise to reinforce the capacity of nations and communities to confront disaster; and the Forum for Cities, announced by four UN agencies to address natural hazards and urban vulnerability.

The Americas region was well represented by national delegations from almost every country of the region, as well as experts and regional representatives of NGOs, who participated actively in the various segments of the session. For more information on the Global Platform visit: <http://www.preventionweb.net/globalplatform/>

Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction: towards a common action.

"The number of disasters and the scale of their impacts continue to grow, driven largely by the increasing vulnerability to natural hazards, but also by the effects of climate change, threatening the lives and livelihoods of ever more millions of people and the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals. There is growing urgency to increase efforts to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005- 2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters. The world is not on track to achieve the aim of a substantive reduction in disaster losses by 2015"

Ban Ki Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations

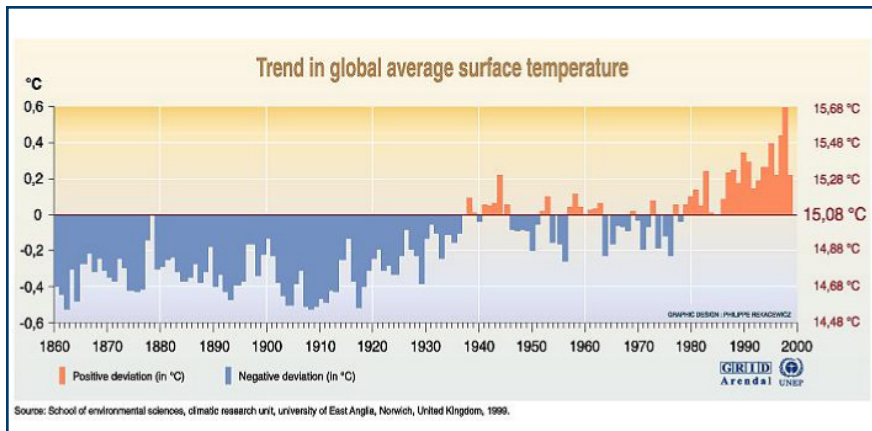


Climate change is recognized as the most important threat to the planet and humanity. It will alter the Earth's surface, ecosystems and livelihoods. The recently launched 4th assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) indicates that the observed global warming is due to human intervention. The carbon dioxide levels (CO₂) have long exceeded concentration registries of the last 650,000 years and probably of past 10 million of years. Eleven of the last 12 years (1995-2006) have recorded the highest superficial temperature averages since the use of instrumental data, and includes a rise in frequency and/or intensity in of climate-related hazard patterns and the disaster risk associated to them. (For further information visit <http://www.ipcc.ch/>)

¹Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator

²Secretary General's Report on the implementation of the ISDR to the UN General Assembly 62nd Session, 2007

Adaptation to Climate Change was one of the key thematic issues discussed in the first session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction that was held in Geneva, earlier this year. (See article on the front page). The experts at the Global Platform stressed the role of the Hyogo Framework for Action as a relevant tool to address some of the challenges posed by adaptation to Climate Change. Priority Four of this framework focuses on the reduction of the underlying risk factors. Nations and communities can develop their resilience to disasters by investing in simple, yet effective, measures to reduce risk and vulnerability. Disasters can be reduced by applying proper zoning regulations and building codes to protect vital infrastructure, such as roads, schools and hospitals. The protection of valuable ecosystems such as coral reefs, mangroves and wetlands act as natural barriers to storms and other hydro-meteorological events. These are some measures and actions identified in the HFA that illustrate its contribution as an effective tool for adaptation to Climate Change.



This dialogue is already underway in our region. For instance, in the recent forum *Clima Latino*, organized by the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) in Ecuador, disaster risk reduction was a central topic to all discussions related to adaptation to climate change. To contribute to this process, the UN/ISDR secretariat, regional unit for the Americas is currently drafting a regional strategy that aims at integrating national ongoing initiatives on disaster risk reduction and climate change in the region, within the context of HFA implementation.



Cooperation agreement with OAS



On last June 6 —during the first session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Geneva, Switzerland— the Organization of American States (OAS), through its Department of Sustainable Development, and the secretariat of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (UN/ISDR) signed a cooperation agreement to support the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in the Americas.



Sálvamo Briceño and Haris Sanahuja from the UN/ISDR secretariat, Pablo García, OAS representative, during the Global Platform session.

The agreement was signed by Jose Miguel Insulza, Secretary General of the OAS, and Sálvamo Briceño, Director of the UN/ISDR secretariat. This inter-institutional cooperation agreement is relevant at both political and technical level, and will contribute to advancing the creation of a regional platform to be incorporated into the strengthened UN/ISDR system.

The Greater Caribbean met in Saint Marc, Haiti.



Delegations from 28 countries and several international organizations met in Saint-Marc, Haiti, from 14-16 November, for the first ever High-Level Conference on Disaster Reduction was held amongst countries of the Greater Caribbean.



Recent years have proven the need for a regional vision which takes into account scant resources and the realities of heterogeneous actors with common interests and the Conference allowed for the exchange of experiences, lessons learnt and best practices, as well as determine areas of intra-regional co-operation, bearing in mind the sheer number of initiatives in the region and the economies of scale achieved by harnessing the wealth of complementary capacities which ranges from high-tech equipment and scientific knowledge to the low-tech but key experience fundamental at the community level.

The most tangible outcome of the Conference was the adoption of a Saint-Marc Plan of Action to guide the work of the Association of Caribbean States in disaster risk reduction over the next five years.

One of the main objectives of the Saint-Marc Plan of Action is the translation of UN's Hyogo Framework for Action into the realities of the Greater Caribbean. The preparatory process for the Conference was actively supported by a technical group composed by **OCHA**; **IADB**; **UN-ECLAC**; **CDERA**; **CEPRENAC**; **IFRC**; **PAHO**; **UNDP** and **UN/ISDR** secretariat.

Closure of the 2006-2007 DRR Campaign and preparations for the 2008-2009 Campaign.



The international campaign on prevention and disaster risk reduction 2006-2007 finalized with an award ceremony to the best drawings and paintings held by the Latin American and Caribbean drawing and painting contest as part of the International Campaign for Disaster Reduction, "Disaster Risk Reduction Begins at School". The drawing and painting contest was organized by the United Nations, International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat (UN/ISDR secretariat), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Plan International and European Community Humanitarian Affairs Office (ECHO).



The 2006-2007 campaign was focused on schools, children and communities to address the importance of reducing the vulnerability of schools as well promoting the introduction of disaster risk reduction components in the curricula of the primary school. Recently the UN/ISDR secretariat, regional unit for the Americas, organized a small workshop with PAHO and several other partners as a first planning exercise to prepare the new international campaign 2008-2009, which will be focused on Safe Hospitals.

NEW MEMBERS

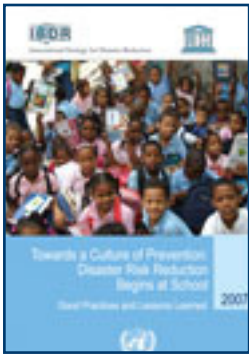
The following new members have joined the UN/ISDR secretariat, regional unit for the Americas: Julio Garcia as Regional Officer, (juliog@eird.org), Julio Trelles as Communications Officer (jtrelles@eird.org) and Jennifer Guralnick as Disaster Reduction Advisor (jguralnick@eird.org)

New publications

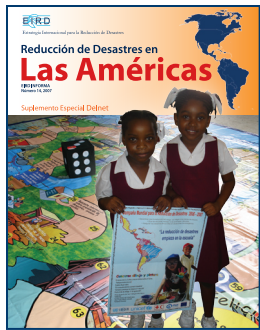
Below is a list of the latest publications on Disaster Risk Reduction for your reference:



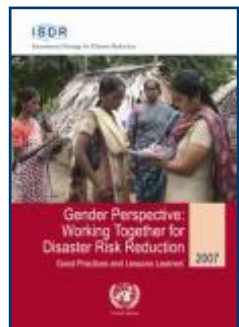
- "Collection of Tools for Local Risk Management, edited by UN-Habitat and IDRC Canada, as part of the Support to Local Authorities of cities of the Americas initiative.



- Towards a Culture of Prevention: Disaster Risk Reduction Begins at School. Good Practices and Lessons Learned 2007.



- ISDR Informs magazine, the Americas. No.14.2007



- Gender perspective, working together for disaster risk reduction: good practices and lessons learned" edited by the UN/ISDR.

Web links to keep in mind

- Resident Coordinators section in the ISDR website
<http://www.eird.org/regional/coordinators.html>



- Information on the Global Platform for DRR
<http://www.preventionweb.net/globalplatform/>



- Beta version of Prevention web
<http://www.preventionweb.net>

- Early Warning Platform website
<http://www.unisdr.org/ppew/>

- Activities related to International Day for Disaster Reduction
http://www.unisdr.org/eng/public_aware/world_camp/2006-2007/iddr/2007-iddr-activities-e.html



United Nations, secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
Regional Unit for The Americas
Casa 843 A y B Avenida Arnoldo Cano Arosemena ,City of Knowledge, Clayton, Panamá.
PO BOX 0843-03441
Panama City, Panama
Telephone: (507) 317-1124, 317-1120, 317-0775.
Fax: (507) 317-0600
eird@eird.org
www.eird.org

