



Woodrow Wilson School  
of Public and International Affairs

**Michael Oppenheimer**  
*Albert G. Milbank Professor of Geosciences  
and International Affairs*  
Director, STEP Program  
Woodrow Wilson School  
448 Robertson Hall  
Princeton, New Jersey 08544-1013  
Telephone (609) 258-2338  
FAX (609) 258-6082  
E-Mail: omichael@Princeton.edu

September 5, 2014

**Character reference and support for Allan Lavell for the:**

**2015 United Nations Sasakawa Award for Disaster Risk Reduction**

I write in support of Allan Lavell's nomination for the Sasakawa award. Based on his unique role in the Disaster Risk Management community, Allan certainly merits this award. By transcending ideology and emphasizing pragmatic approaches to designing policies, institutional arrangements, and research agendas, Allan has managed to effectively bridge the many schisms in the DRM community which have inhibited effective advocacy and planning. As his coauthor of chapter 1 in IPCC's "SREX" report, I witnessed firsthand Allan's ability to elucidate the connection between theory and implementation, between grand strategies and pragmatic approaches, between academic concepts and peoples' needs on the ground. He provided the glue which held two disparate communities, DRM and Climate Change Adaptation, together through a two-year effort, allowing them to put aside rivalries, stale intellectual wars, and minor interpersonal squabbles in order to unite to produce an assessment which has become a game-changer for these communities. Allan is not only possessed of an outstanding ability to conceptualize DRM in a way which leads toward solutions, he is also singularly accessible and effective at communicating what the problems are and what needs to be done to solve them. It is these personal qualities in addition to his high intellectual caliber, his ability to see the big picture and make it the servant of solving problems at the small scale which have made him a leader of the DRM community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Oppenheimer".

Michael Oppenheimer  
Albert G. Milbank Professor of Geosciences and International Affairs  
Princeton University