



SYMPOSIUM ON MULTI-HAZARD EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS FOR INTEGRATED DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

23-24 May 2006, WMO Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland

GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPANTS

1. Background

1.1. International Developments Related to Early Warning Systems

During the Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction (Hyogo, Kobe, Japan, 18-22 January 2005), 168 countries adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 (HFA) and identified five high priority areas of which the second stresses the need for “identifying, assessing and monitoring disaster risks and enhancing early warnings” as a critical component of disaster risk reduction. Furthermore, HFA stresses that disaster risk reduction must be addressed with an *integrated* and *multi-hazard* approach. Following the Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction, at the 2005 United Nations World Summit (New York, September 2005), Governments requested the establishment of worldwide early warning systems for all natural hazards, building on existing national and regional capacities to complement broader disaster preparedness and mitigation initiatives.

In 2005, the preliminary report of the Global Survey of Early Warning Systems¹ and the outcomes from the Third International Early Warning Conference (Bonn, Germany, 27-29 March 2006) (EWC-III), have indicated that while there has been progress in different aspects of early warnings for different hazards, there still remain gaps and challenges to ensure that early warning systems are integrated in disaster risk reduction strategies, in all countries, particularly those with the least resources.

Initiatives worldwide have emerged towards development of national and regional strategic plans for disaster risk reduction. Furthermore, in 2006, an Integrated Work Programme (IWP) is being developed for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) System for implementation of HFA, for consultations with governments and various organizations' networks.

1.2. Importance of Early Warning Systems as an Integral Part of Disaster Risk Reduction

A fundamental precondition for national disaster risk reduction is availability of well-functioning early warning systems that deliver accurate, reliable and understandable warnings, in a timely manner, to authorities, operational disaster managers and populations at risk, to enable early actions to reduce the impacts of potential disasters. Such systems must rely on commitment, collaboration, coordination, and information sharing among different stakeholders, at different levels (international, regional, national, local).

¹ Global Survey of Early Warning Systems: An Assessment of Capacities, Gaps and Opportunities Toward Building a Comprehensive Global Early Warning System for all Natural Hazard. The Survey was requested by UN Secretary-General, in his report “In Larger Freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all,” A/59/2005, to the UN General Assembly on 21 March 2005. The report of this Survey was launched at the Third International Early Warning Conference, 27-29 March 2006, Bonn, Germany.

Over the years, many international and regional agencies and organisations of the United Nations (including its specialised agencies) have worked with their Members on different aspects of early warning systems and disaster risk reduction, such as development of specialised technical capacities for monitoring, detecting, and forecasting for different natural hazards,² governance and organisational aspects, emergency preparedness and response planning, coordination of humanitarian response, community-based mechanisms for emergency preparedness/response and public education. Hazard-specific early warning systems have been developed, which in some cases have similarities and common crosscutting elements. There may be the potential that enhanced integration among different components of early warning systems could potentially lead to strengthened capacities and economies of these systems at national to international levels, and enhanced capacities for disaster risk reduction. However, there is need for identification and prioritisation of actions that can lead to more effective and sustainable early warning systems.

1.3. Concept of Multi-Hazard Approach

The concept of *multi-hazard approach* has been referenced in various international events, and documents; however, there is still no clear understanding of this concept. It has been suggested that a multi-hazard approach could result in enhanced operational effectiveness, cost effectiveness and sustainability of early warning systems through building on and complementing existing early warning systems capacities, infrastructures and activities of various stakeholders involved in different aspects of early warning systems at national to international levels. The feasibility and achievable benefits of multi-hazard approach need to be further explored and demonstrated, and the implications on governance, organisational and operational aspects need to be better understood.

2. Symposium Goals

This Symposium brings together near 90 multi-disciplinary experts from different agencies and organisations at national to international levels to address two main goals:

1. To provide recommendations for an integrated approach to warning systems for enhanced disaster risk reduction, building on and linking existing capacities of different stakeholders;
2. To explore further the concept of multi-hazard approach to early warning systems, related potential economies and synergies that may result from such approach, and provide recommendations on additional studies and/or demonstrations that may be required to fully assess all aspects of such approach.

² For example, WMO through a coordinated network of National Meteorological and Hydrological Services of its 187 Members, has developed the operational infrastructure for national warnings of weather-, water-, and climate-related hazards. UNESCO-IOC is coordinating the development of regional tsunami warning systems (TWS), through Intergovernmental Coordination Groups (ICG). Other international agencies, such as FAO and WHO, have developed global mechanisms for issuance of warnings for food security and health, respectively.

3. Expected outcomes

This multi-agency multi-disciplinary Symposium is convened to develop recommendations and prioritisation for actions to address gaps and needs related to governance, organisational and operational aspects of early warning systems for enhanced disaster risk reduction. Through Sessions' and Working Groups' discussions, it is aimed to identify and prioritise actions at national level for strengthening of early warning capabilities and what needs to be done at the regional and international levels to support strengthening of these national capacities. These recommendations would be used to stimulate partnerships and a more coordinated approach among stakeholders towards strengthening of early warning capacities at the national, regional and international levels.

Furthermore, the outcome of the Symposium would provide guidance for next steps towards better understanding of the concept of "multi-hazard approach" and evaluating the viability of such approach to early warning systems. The recommendations emerging from this Symposium, as relevant, would also be incorporated in the ISDR's Integrated Work Programme, which will undergo extensive consultations with governments and various organisations' networks in 2006.

4. Guidelines for Participants, Panellists and Chairpersons

4.1. Guidelines for all Participants:

- The Symposium will cover the following five areas related to different aspects of early warning systems, including,

Session I Governance and Organisational Issues Related to Early Warning Systems for Integrated Disaster Risk Reduction

Session II and Working Group A .. Risk Identification and Linkages to Early Warnings

Session III and Working Group B . Technical and Operational Capacities for Observing, Detecting, Monitoring, Forecasting and Warnings of Hazards

Session IV and Working Group C . Communication and Dissemination Mechanisms

Session V and Working Group D .. Integration of Risk Information and Early Warnings in Emergency Preparedness, Planning and Response

- The format has been designed to maximize opportunities for discussions in relation to the different components of early warning systems. Details about the structure and formats of the Sessions and Working Groups addressing these issues are provided in the [Provisional Annotated Agenda](#).
- The first session on "Governance and Organisational Issues Related to Early Warning Systems for Integrated Disaster Risk Reduction" is designed to lay out the framework for governance and organisational aspects, which should be further explored during all Panels' and Working groups' discussions.
- A Synthesis Session is scheduled at the end of the conference to review the outcomes, recommendation of Sessions and Working Groups, and develop a consolidated set of recommendations as outcome of the Symposium.
- All participants are urged to review the goals, expected outcomes and key issues to be discussed in the Symposium, as provided in the [Provisional Annotated Agenda](#). It would be highly appreciated that all participants would prepare issues and recommendations for detailed discussions during the Working Groups, in their areas of expertise. Any updates or specific documentation available in advance will be shared with all participants through the Symposium's website http://www.wmo.int/disasters/ews_symposium_2006.

4.2. Guidelines for Chairpersons and Panellists

- Except for Session 1 (at the beginning) and Synthesis Session (at the end) of the Symposium, each Session and its associated Working Group are co-chaired by two persons as identified in the [Provisional Annotated Agenda](#).
- For each Session, the Chairpersons should coordinate to deliver a 10-minute overview at the beginning of the Session to identify key issues, goals and objectives of the Session and related Working Group, and deliver a brief summary of the discussions at the end of the Session.
- The Panellists should strictly comply with the allotted time of 10 minutes. The chairpersons and panellists are urged to ensure their contributions and presentations, in each of their respective Sessions and Working Groups, address the goals and expected outcomes of the Symposium. Please note that the presentations should not focus on describing specific experiences but rather on identification and prioritisation of issues based on lessons learned, challenges, gaps and needs and recommendations for addressing them.
- A coordination meeting between Sessions' Co-chairs and Panellists will be held on Tuesday 23 May 2006 from 8.30 AM to 9.00 AM.
- Chairpersons will get assistance from designated staff to integrate the results of their panels in the working draft of the Symposium outcomes.
- More specific guidelines will be shared with chairpersons to and their presentations in advance.

Please note that the Symposium will be conducted in English only.

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