

OPENING STATEMENT AT THE MEETING OF THE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION FOCAL
POINTS OF REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND TECHNICAL COMMISSIONS AND
PROGRAMMES

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by

M. Jarraud

Secretary-General

World Meteorological Organization

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[Officials to be acknowledged,]

Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization, Michel Jarraud, I wish to welcome you to WMO in Geneva for this Meeting of the Disaster Risk Reduction Focal Points of Regional Associations and Technical Commissions and Programmes.

Events of hydrometeorological origin — tropical cyclones, storms, floods, droughts, heat waves, cold waves, and wildfires — continue to trigger the largest majority of disasters. Disaster risk reduction is therefore at the core of the mission of the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services, or NMHSs, of the 191 Members of WMO.

As the United Nations system's authoritative voice on the atmosphere, its interaction with the oceans, the climate it produces and the resulting distribution of water resources, WMO promotes international cooperation in these areas and coordinates the work of the NMHSs.

Indeed, NMHSs are the major custodians and providers of data and competencies required to support disaster risk reduction DRR at all levels. WMO enables them to provide unique scientific and technical services that underpin DRR and adaptation to

climate change. These include observing, detecting, monitoring, predicting and early warning of a wide range of weather-, climate-, and water-related hazards.

WMO extends technical and operational support to NMHSs through its scientific and technical programmes and commissions, its Global Data-Processing and Forecasting System provided by three World Meteorological Centres and various specialized centres hosted by Members.

In collaboration with other international, regional, and national organizations, WMO also contributes to reducing the impacts of human-induced disasters, such as those associated with chemical and nuclear accidents and forest fires. In addition to public safety, such extremes affect water and food supplies, the environment, transport, health, and other socio-economic sectors. Through its DRR programme, WMO supports capacities in risk analysis, early warning systems, sectoral planning, and risk financing.

Over the past decade, various capacity development initiatives for early warning systems in over 50 countries have contributed to reducing substantially mortality risk from natural hazards. Furthermore, WMO is developing international standards and guidelines for weather, climate and hydrological hazard definitions and methodologies for statistical and forward-looking hazard analysis.

The Hyogo Framework for Action provided the impetus for promoting a culture of prevention and international cooperation in DRR with the aim of building resilience and sustainable development. Many gains have been realized, but much more remains to be done. While there have been important advances in early warning in the past decade, many countries still have not benefited as much as they could have, and significant gaps prevail. A key challenge has been in reaching the “last mile” such as the most remote and vulnerable populations, with timely, meaningful, and actionable warning information. Some of the gaps are the result of weak coordination among stakeholders, inadequate public awareness and participation, and insufficient political and financial commitment.

The new Sendai framework for DRR adopted by the 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction last March addresses the challenges posed by natural climate variability and climate change, which increase disaster risks. In a changing climate, past observations are no longer representative of the future, thus being inadequate for producing projections. However, more than ever before, climate information and services are needed for risk-informed economic and social development decision-making. It is for this reason that WMO and various partners

have established the Global Framework for Climate Services, which promotes the development and application of climate information products and services for climate-sensitive sectors.

Through its scientific and technical programmes, WMO remains committed to research and the development of technologies related to observing, monitoring, modelling, forecasting, and warning of hydrometeorological hazards, as well as making them available to all its Members. Through its DRR Programme WMO will continue strengthening its support to NMHSs in enhancing and optimizing their early warning services and to respond efficiently and effectively to urgent requests of its Members.

At the international level, WMO will specifically support the establishment of an international network of institutions and experts on multi-hazard early warning systems that will facilitate sharing of expertise and best practice and undertake relevant baseline studies, reviews and research.

At the regional level, WMO will strengthen its regional infrastructure to broaden their operations to service DRR for society. In this regard, WMO will promote regional coordination mechanisms for multi-hazard early warnings, together with international, non-governmental, and academic organizations.

At the national level, WMO will assist its Members in building disaster resilience by strengthening the capacity of their NMHSs to deliver timely and effective services for DRR, particularly through the development of impact-based forecast and risk-informed warning services.

At the city and community level, WMO will support advocacies and awareness campaigns on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, as well as multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral partnerships for building city and community resilience.

Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In closing, I would again wish to express WMO's Secretariat's appreciation to you all for your attendance at this meeting. Your presence speaks of your deep commitment to the prevention and mitigation of disasters. Together, we are working for a safer world.

Thank you.