



**UNISDR Science and Technology Conference on the
Implementation
of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
2015-2030**

27-29 January 2016

Geneva International Conference Centre

Opening Statement

Dr. Robert Glasser,

the Special Representative of the UN Secretary for Disaster
Risk Reduction

- Your Excellency, Pichet Durongkaveroj, Minister of Science and Technology, Government of Thailand.
- Ms. Stella Gama, Assistant Director of Forestry, Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Mining, Malawi.
- Dr. Flavia Schlegel, Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences, UNESCO.
- Dr. José Rubiera, Director, National Forecast Center, Cuba.

- Distinguished delegates, Ladies and gentlemen,

- It is an honour and privilege for me, as newly appointed Special Representative to the UN Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction, to welcome you, to the UNISDR Science and Technology Conference on the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

- Let me begin by thanking my predecessor, Margareta Wahlstrom, for her wonderful contribution to the disaster risk reduction agenda.
- While I am new to the United Nations System, I have a long relationship with science and research communities. In executive roles in government and civil society organisations, and in a multi-disciplinary science laboratory, I have appreciated the value of having scientific evidence and advice that speaks directly to urgent policy and global challenges. I understand how difficult it can be to deliver scientific findings to the government and the general public.
- The slow evolution of our understanding of climate change is a good example. The basic principles of greenhouse effect was described as far back as 1824 but today we are still coming to terms with humankind's undoubted influence on global temperatures, the consequences for extreme weather events and the impacts on society. The painstaking work of the hundreds of scientists who have contributed to the

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's reports is an outstanding example of the public service and dedication to the greater good which we have come to expect from the global science community.

- The IPCC has laid out the evidence for us in a way that is convincing and actionable. A fine example of this is the special IPCC report initiated by UNISDR and the Norwegian government, entitled “Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation.” It is sub-titled a Summary for Policymakers and written in plain language which helps to bridge the science-policy gap. It is an innovative report which was one of the first of its kind to integrate the science on climate change with a disaster risk management perspective.
- Elsewhere in the world, this week we have some other practical demonstrations of how science and technology can contribute to reducing disaster risk and disaster losses. The 2nd Global Platform on Emergency Telecommunications is taking place in Kuwait organised

by the International Telecommunications Union, discussing how ICTs can help to disseminate early warnings and reduce mortality in disasters. The International Recovery Forum was held in Kobe, Japan, with participants from 37 countries exchanging experience on building back better after disasters.

- What motivates these gatherings is the knowledge that we can do a lot more to reduce unnecessary loss of life and livelihoods, especially in least developed countries where disasters may not amount to much in terms of absolute global economic losses but can have a crippling impact on long-term sustainable development and loss of life.
- During the decade of the Hyogo Framework for Action from 2005 to 2015 on average 22,000 people died as a result of disasters and 173 million people were affected on average every year. We estimate that the true scale of economic losses is now averaging between \$250 billion and \$300 billion per annum.

Context

- This is the first major disaster risk reduction event of 2016, after a remarkable previous year 2015 setting the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Sustainability started in Sendai, Japan, where the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction adopted the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The year continued with the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development, a new set of sustainable development goals and, finally, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.
- All of these agreements recognise the central importance of disaster risk reduction to the ultimate development goal of sustainable development. The expectation running through them is that the scientific and technical communities can support decisions-makers with evidence, risk information and solutions.

- The outcomes of this Conference today and tomorrow will set the course for further collaboration on the implementation of the Sendai Framework and build coherence in our understanding of disaster risk reduction across the other relevant international agreements.
- It is most appropriate that this is focused specifically on science and technology. More than 1,000 scientists, experts, policymakers, researchers and relevant practitioners have registered for the conference.
- The Sendai Framework specifically recognises the importance of enhancing the scientific and technical work on disaster risk reduction and it calls for a mobilization of the scientific and technological community through the coordination of existing networks and scientific research institutions at all levels and in all regions.

- In particular, the Sendai Framework calls for a wide range of efforts, **with the support of partners**, to:
 - strengthen the evidence-base ;
 - promote scientific research on disaster risk patterns, causes and effects;
 - disseminate risk information with the best use of geospatial information technology;
 - provide guidance on methodologies and standards for risk assessments, disaster risk modelling and the use of data;
 - identify research and technology gaps and set recommendations for research priority areas in disaster risk reduction;
 - promote and support the availability and application of science and technology to decision-making;
 - use post-disaster reviews as opportunities to enhance learning and public policy; and disseminate studies.

- In Sendai, the science and technical community and partners responded with voluntary commitments to

establish an international partnership to mobilize science for action on disaster risk reduction and resilience building.

- This is vital as the Sendai Framework goes beyond natural hazards. It maps out a broad, people-centred approach to disaster risk reduction which applies to small and large-scale disasters caused by natural or man-made hazards as well as related environmental, technological and biological hazards and risks;

Purpose and Expected outcomes

- As requested in Sendai, this conference aims to identify needs and knowledge gaps; explore new ways of working together and most importantly, to make the science available and accessible.
- By the end of the week we will have two outcomes:
1/ Launch of the UNISDR Science and Technology Partnership and

2/ Agreement on a Science and Technology Road Map for the implementation of the Sendai Framework.

- This conference is the result of the shared vision of many partners, and already shows the readiness for cooperation in a Science and Technology Partnership for Disaster Risk Reduction.

- I invite and encourage all partners to continue in this vein and to use this occasion to announce any funding and other commitments, or contribution to the Science and Technology Road Map and implementation of the Sendai Framework.

- In order to achieve these outcomes, the conference is organized around four workstreams:
 - The Science and Technology Partnership to support Sendai Framework implementation.
 - Understanding disaster risk, risk assessment and early warning.

- Use of science, technology and innovation tools, methods and standards.
- Leveraging science through capacity development and research.

- The discussions and deliberations in these sessions will shape the Roadmap.

- As we begin our work, it is important for us to keep a few crucial points in mind:
 - The Open Ended Intergovernmental Expert Working Group on Indicators and Terminology for Disaster Risk Reduction will continue its work next month here in Geneva. Our work this week is clearly not to duplicate their efforts but rather to build the partnerships that can provide the scientific foundations in support of the ambitious DRR agenda.

 - Second, the next session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction is being planned for 2017

and is an important milestone to keep in mind in the context of a progress review.

Appreciation

- Recognizing the value of the partnership, I would like to express my great appreciation to the 15 conference co-organisers and partners mentioned in the conference brochure, the UNISDR Scientific and Technical Advisory Group (STAG) and others who have worked hard to make this conference happen.
- I would like to recognize as well the almost three hundred contributors who organized an extraordinary range of posters – which I encourage you all to take time to visit.
- And the partners who organized side events on important issues such as Knowledge Hubs for DRR, Gender, the Role of Youth, Ethics and Funding for DRR.

- I would like to thank our host, the Confederation of Switzerland and our sponsors, the Republic of Germany and the United States of America.
- I would also like to express my appreciation to the Republic of Korea which is sponsoring tonight's reception on behalf of the five countries of the MITKA Partnership – Mexico, Indonesia, Korea, Turkey and Australia.

I look forward to meeting with many of you over the next three days and I wish us all a successful conference.