



African Regional Consultation on Disaster Risk Reduction

2-3 June 2004,

Johannesburg, South Africa

Context:

Disaster reduction is an old issue. Increased understanding shows that more efforts need to be given to disaster reduction instead of response. Disaster reduction has increasingly appeared on all important international development agenda, including the World Summit on Sustainable Development and UN Millennium Development Goals. It is becoming more widely accepted that developing countries will not achieve the Millennium Development Goals without reducing people's vulnerability to disasters and without integrating disaster reduction into development planning and programmes.

In this context, the UN General Assembly has decided to convene the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) from 18-22 January 2005 in Japan. This provides a great opportunity for Governments to get together to take stock of the progress made in disaster reduction during the last 10 years and to carry out consultations on the focus for future priorities in disaster reduction at national, regional and international levels.

In Africa, disasters are on the rise as is the impact of disasters on Africans. Each year, disasters not only deprive millions of people of food security, access to clean drinking water, social services, but also reverse past development gains and impede further socio-economic progress. In addition, the enormous humanitarian relief necessitated as a result of preventable disasters diverts billions of US dollars, which could have been used for poverty reduction and socio-economic development. Disasters, therefore, prevent African countries from achieving sustainable development.

To sustain gains in socio-economic development at country level, more and more governments have started to shift their emphasis from disaster response only, to disaster reduction, from an isolated disaster management approach to an integrated one, linking disaster reduction to development issues, such as water resource management, environmental protection, land use and planning, and poverty reduction. To facilitate the advancement of the disaster reduction process, AU/NEPAD and UN/ISDR Africa have been taking a leading role in advocating and coordinating disaster reduction initiatives,

with support from the World Bank, UNDP, and other UN agencies and in cooperation with African Development Bank (AfDB) and Sub-Regional Economic Commissions (RECs).

To sustain the momentum, an African Working group on Disaster Reduction has just been set up, whose members include the AU, NEPAD, AfDB, ECCAS, COMESA, CEN-SAD, ECOWAS, IGAD, SADC, UMA, with full support of UN/ISDR Africa. This newly established Working Group offers an organized forum for major African institutions and experts from international organizations to get together regularly to discuss and plan how to facilitate and coordinate disaster reduction and the integration of disaster risk reduction at national level in Africa. In the long-term, AU/NEPAD and UN/ISDR Africa, in cooperation with UN agencies and regional institutions, will promote the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the full integration of disaster risk reduction into development planning and processes. In the short-term, they will jointly encourage active participation of African governments and African institutions in the preparation of a common strategy for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR).

To facilitate active participation of representatives of African governments in the forthcoming WCRD and carry out further consultations on disaster reduction in Africa, AU/NEPAD and UN/ISDR are organizing an African Regional Consultation with support from the UNDP and ISESCO, in cooperation with sub-regional institutions and UN agencies on 2-3 June 2004 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Goal:

The goal of the African Regional Consultation on Disaster Reduction is to promote regional cooperation and collaboration in disaster reduction, and integration of disaster reduction into development planning, policies and implementation, as part of the African preparatory process for the WCDR.

Specific objectives:

Specific objectives are to offer:

- a platform to share information and experience in disaster reduction, especially integration of disaster reduction into public policy, promotion of disaster emergency response and disaster reduction at the community level and professional capacity building;
- a forum to evaluate what has been done since the first international conference on disaster reduction held in 1994 in Yokohama, Japan and discuss what should be African's areas of priority to be considered at the during the WCDR to be held in January 2005, Kobe, Japan;
- an opportunity to discuss measures urgently needed to be taken on integration of disaster reduction into sustainable development planning and programmes,

- a forum to carry out further consultations with participants from all African governments on the draft Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction and areas of priority so that a regional programme on disaster reduction could be developed;

Output:

- Better understanding and knowledge of the disaster risks and progress made in disaster reduction in Africa;
- Comments and input given for the revision of the draft regional strategy on disaster reduction and areas of priority identified as major components of a regional programme on disaster reduction;
- Areas of African priorities in disaster reduction identified as an input to the plan of action on disaster reduction to be adopted by the forthcoming World Conference on Disaster Reduction.
- Better understanding of the interrelationship between disaster reduction and sustainable development — neither disaster reduction nor sustainable development can be achieved in isolation from each other. In other words, disaster reduction is an investment in sustainable development, and sustainable development is a tool for disaster reduction.
- Better understanding on ways to link disaster reduction with poverty alleviation, water resource management, climate change adaptation, land use and planning and environment protection

Duration, Venue:

The Regional Consultation will be held from 2-3 June 2004 and the venue is Hilton Hotel, Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Languages:

English and French

Participants:

The Regional Consultation on Disaster Reduction is designed for the participation of senior government officials and officials from sub-regional organizations who are responsible for disaster reduction and in a position to influence policy makers and make strategic but practical decisions for the implementation of disaster reduction policies at national level.

The organizers of the regional consultation would like to invite one participant from each country and sub-regional organizations. Due to the financial constraints, the organizers will only be able to cover the cost of one participant, who preferably is the focal point for disaster reduction in the country or the sub-organization. Participants from

UN agencies, donor countries and international organizations should cover their own cost for their participation in the Conference. We will send information on logistical arrangements to each participant upon your confirmation.

Presentation:

1. Preparation of country presentations

For purpose of preparation for the WCDR, all governments have been requested to provide to the UN/ISDR Secretariat by 15 June 2004 national information on what has been done since the adoption of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action (1994). This information will provide a basis for the elaboration of two main WCDR conference documents, namely:

- **a political declaration** with a strategy and vision to reduce risk and vulnerability in the period 2005-2015
- **a programme document** containing policy measures to implement the strategy and vision set out by the abovementioned political declaration

To assist African delegations (including RECs) in their preparations for submission of their replies on national measures by 15 June 2004, **participants in the Johannesburg meeting are hereby requested to prepare a presentation paper which should follow the format below (each paper should be 6 pages maximum):**

1. Brief introduction of major disasters in the country
2. Brief introduction of existing national, sub-regional policies, strategies, legislation and national disaster management plans, focusing on answering the following questions:
 - ✓ Has your country (or RECs) developed national (sub-regional) policies, national strategy, national plan of disaster reduction or management, if yes, please list them;
 - ✓ If yes, do these official documents provide guidance and resources for disaster reduction?
 - ✓ How are the existing policies, strategies and legislation on disaster reduction being implemented? Do you have mechanisms or national/REC committees/platforms to monitor the implementation of the existing policies, strategies and legislations? ;
 - ✓ What are the major constraints encountered in implementing policies, strategies and legislation on disaster reduction and its integration in sustainable development?

- ✓ Please provide two successful stories (best practices) on disaster reduction in your country or sub-region that you wish to share with other countries;
- ✓ Please make one or two suggestions on how to advance disaster risk reduction in Africa;
- ✓ Please recommend two or three priorities that your country wishes to be addressed at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction

2. Other Presentations

Participants from UN agencies, donor countries and regional and international organizations are invited to provide an information paper which outlines your organization's policy, strategy, programmes and plans on disaster reduction in Africa.

Organizers:

The Regional Consultation on Disaster Reduction will be convened as a joint effort of AU/NEPAD and the UN/ISDR Africa, together with UNDP and ISESCO. AU/NEPAD is responsible for coordinating the organization of the event. UNDP and ISESCO will provide financial support. The UN/ISDR Africa is providing overall support to the regional event from human and financial resources, including supporting documentation, identification of resource persons, communication and logistics. The AU/NEPAD and UN/ISDR Africa will jointly establish a team to coordinate the preparation and organization of the event, with support of sub-regional and UN agencies.

Contact persons:

Noroarisoa Rakotondrandria
UN/ISDR Africa
Nairobi, KENYA
Fax: +254 20 624726
E-mail: Noroarisoa.rakotondrandria@unep.org

Note:

Programme Agenda will be sent to you with additional information as soon as we receive your confirmation of participation in the Regional Consultation on Disaster Reduction.