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WORLD CONFERENCE ON DISASTER REDUCTION

Preparatory Committee
First Session
Geneva, 6-7 May 2004

INFORMATION NOTE FOR PARTICIPANTS

1. Introduction

This document has been prepared to facilitate the participation of delegates and observers in the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction.

2. Dates and Venue of the first session

The first session of the Preparatory Committee will be held as follows:

Dates: 6-7 May 2004

Venue: Palais des Nations
Conference Room XIX
(Building E, Door 40, Third floor, Access through Lifts 40 to 48
or escalators 51 to 54)

Address: 8-14 avenue de la Paix
CH-1211 Geneva 10
Tel: +41 (0)22 917 2759
Fax: +41 (0)22 917 0169
E-mail: isdr-wcdr@un.org
Web site: www.unisdr.org

The Palais des Nations is located within the Geneva international organizations area, in front of Place des Nations, 15 minutes from the A-40 highway and Geneva-Cointrin International Airport.

3. Registration of participants

Delegates wishing to participate in the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction are requested to inform the ISDR Secretariat of the composition of their delegation, by sending an **official letter** from their highest authorities and an **individual Conference Registration Form** for each delegate to the ISDR Secretariat (E-mail: isdr-wcdr@un.org or Fax N°: +41 (0)22 917 0169) **no later than 30 April 2004**. The form is available in English and French on ISDR's web site at www.unisdr.org.

A UN ground pass will be delivered by the Security and Identification Section of the United Nations in Geneva upon presentation of the copy of the above documents and a valid identification document (ID, passport, driving licence ..). The pass will be made available to all registered delegates one day ahead of the meeting (5 May 2004) at:

The Security and Identification Section
Villa des Feuillantines
13 avenue de la Paix
CH-1211, Geneva 10
(Office hours: Monday to Friday from 8:00 to 17:00 non-stop)

Delegates and observers are advised that they will have access to the Palais des Nations in Geneva **only upon presentation of a UN ground pass**.

4. Information for Non-Governmental Organizations and other major groups

A. Only **accredited NGOs and other major groups** can register their representatives for the first session of the Preparatory Committee. Please refer to general registration instructions under item 4.

B. **Accredited** NGOs and other major groups eligible for registration fall under the following categories:

- Those with a consultative status with the Economic and Social Council;
- Those on the list of NGOs accredited to the Commission on Sustainable Development;
- Those which participated in the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction (Yokohama, Japan, 1994); and,
- Those that are members of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction, or any of its working groups.

If you are unsure of your organization's accreditation status, please check the following accredited NGO lists on the Internet:

- at <http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/>, for those in consultative status with ECOSOC
- at http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/mgroups/csd_roster.pdf, for CSD roster
- at www.unisdr.org, list of NGOs which participated in the Yokohama Conference (1994), Section on NGOs and other Major Groups

C. Upon receipt of the registration forms by the ISDR Secretariat, each nominated NGO and other major groups' representative will receive a confirmation letter of their registration by fax. That letter will serve as an official invitation to the meeting and can be used to apply for a visa to Switzerland.

D. NGOs and other major groups' representatives are responsible for making arrangements for their own accommodation and travel. All representatives interested in attending are required to have adequate medical insurance prior to arrival.

E. As for any other delegates, UN ground pass for the representatives of the accredited NGOs and other major groups will be made available one day ahead of the meeting (5 May 2004) at:

The Security and Identification Section
Villa des Feuillantines
13 avenue de la Paix
CH-1211, Geneva 10
(Office hours: Monday to Friday from 8:00 to 17:00 non-stop)

F. Please note that each representative is required to bring a copy of the confirmation letter and valid identification document (passport, driver's licence etc.) for identification purposes.

G. Upon presentation of the above documents, each registered representative will receive one individual UN ground pass to allow him/her access to the Palais des Nations during the duration of the meeting.

For more details on the registration and accreditation processes for NGOs and other major groups, please check the 'Information Note for NGOs and other Major Groups on accreditation and registration to the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) and its preparatory meetings' on ISDR's web site (www.unisdr.org).

5. Programme of meetings

The Provisional Agenda and Annotations (A/CONF.206/PC(I)/1) is available on ISDR's website at www.unisdr.org.

Morning meetings are scheduled to take place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and afternoon meetings from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. If any evening sessions are required, they will generally begin at 6 p.m.

6. Seating arrangements

Each government delegation will have three seats, one at the table and two behind. Specifically identified seating will be available for other participants at the session.

7. Languages of the first session of the Preparatory Committee meeting

Due to limited capacity for translation, only key documents will be made available in the six official UN languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish). Other background information / documentation will be available only in English.

8. Meetings and interpretation services

There will be interpretation services for the meeting. The extension of the meetings beyond their normal duration will not be subject to interpretation.

Statements made in any of the six official languages will be interpreted into the other official languages. Any representative may make a statement in a language other than the official languages. In such cases, the delegation should provide either an interpretation or a written text of the statement in one of the official languages. The interpretation or written text will be considered by the Secretariat to represent the official text of the statement and will be used by United Nations interpreters as the basis for interpretation into the other official languages.

Meetings other than those of United Nations bodies, such as meetings of regional or major groups, will be accommodated according to the availability of meeting rooms and services.

9. Documentation

A. Circulation of written statements

If delegations wish to have written statements distributed during the meeting, they are requested to prepare 250 copies. Participants in the session are reminded that the Secretariat will not be in a position to offer reproduction services for such texts.

B. Distribution of official documents

The main documents will be distributed to participants ahead of the meeting, and will also be made available at the meeting.

C. Circulation of other documents

Other documents that United Nations funds, agencies and programmes, Governments, NGOs and other major groups or other accredited organizations may wish to make available to participants in the session are to be provided by the parties in appropriate languages and quantities. The Secretariat will undertake neither reproduction nor translation of such documents, nor will they distribute those documents on behalf of other organizations. Delegations are required to organize the delivery of their own documents to the Palais des Nations. Distribution space will be limited to table tops, and it is recommended that only 250 copies of each document are displayed at any one time. Additional copies and any left outside the authorized area may be removed.

10. Security

Security responsibility for the first session of the Preparatory Committee is the same as that for any other activity at the United Nations. The United Nations Security and Safety Department, in close cooperation with host country law enforcement agencies, is responsible for the security of everyone while they are in the Palais des Nations premises.

A. Access to the Palais des Nations

Taxis are not allowed to enter the Palais des Nations premises. They will be requested to leave participants at the entrance of the Palais, at the Pregny Gate, in front of the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC).

Access to the Palais des Nations will be authorized only for those delegates wearing a UN ground pass.

Personal luggage is not authorized within the Palais des Nations premises.

B. Loss of pass

Loss of UN ground pass must be reported to the United Nations Security and Safety Department (Office A-219, Door 11, Palais des Nations).

11. Other useful information for participants

A. Visas

Participants who need a visa for Switzerland must contact the nearest Swiss Embassy or Consulate. The notification sent by the ISDR Secretariat to the Permanent Missions and UN Organizations on 14 April 2004 serves as an official invitation to the meeting and can be used to apply for a visa to Switzerland.

For accredited NGOs and other major groups' representatives, the registration confirmation letter can be used as supporting documentation in that process (please check details in accreditation note referred to under item 5)

B. Health precautions/medical arrangements

No vaccination certificates are required for travel to Switzerland. For further information, please contact the United Nations Medical Service.

C. Currency, cheques and credit cards

The unit of currency is the Swiss Franc (CHF). Traveller cheques can be changed easily. Credit cards, especially MasterCard and Visa, are widely accepted.

D. Electricity

Most power systems are 220/230 V AC at 50 cycles per second. Appliances rated between 220V and 250V will work anywhere in the country. Plugs have three large round pins. It is recommended that you carry your own adaptor and/or converter.

E. Climate

Geneva is about 300 meters above sea level and its climate is temperate (warm continental and sunny). May is spring time, with temperatures ranging from a high of 20°C during the day to a low of 5°C at night.

F. How to contact the ISDR Secretariat

The Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR Secretariat) has been appointed as the Conference Secretariat for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) and its Preparatory Committees, within the United Nations Secretariat.

Should you have any specific queries or need additional information regarding the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the WCDR, please contact the ISDR Secretariat at: isdr-wcdr@un.org.

- For Delegates and Representatives from Member States, UN Agencies and IGOs:
Ms. Christel Rose, Tel: +41 (0)22 917 2786
- For NGOs: Ms. Yuki Matsuoka, Tel: +41 (0)22 917 2792
- For other matters linked to the first session of the Preparatory Committee:
Ms. Elena Dokhlik, Tel: +41 (0)22 917 2759
