

# *The importance of environment in humanitarian assistance*

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## Purpose

- **Give perspective on the link between environment and humanitarian assistance.**
- **Use opportunity presented by WCDR to further strengthen current efforts.**





## Introduction: risk mitigation requires comprehensive approaches

- **Effective humanitarian assistance must integrate variety of disciplines, including environment.**
- **Preparedness, prevention, response preparedness and response must also be linked (e.g. lessons can support prevention, preparedness).**
- **Effective preparedness requires that these links be established before a disaster.**





## Environment - humanitarian assistance links: examples

- **Industrial & Technological Accidents**
- **Forest Fires**
- **Natural disasters**
- **Combinations of technological / natural events (e.g. earthquake damage)**
- **Environmental impacts from complex emergencies (e.g. IDP camps)**

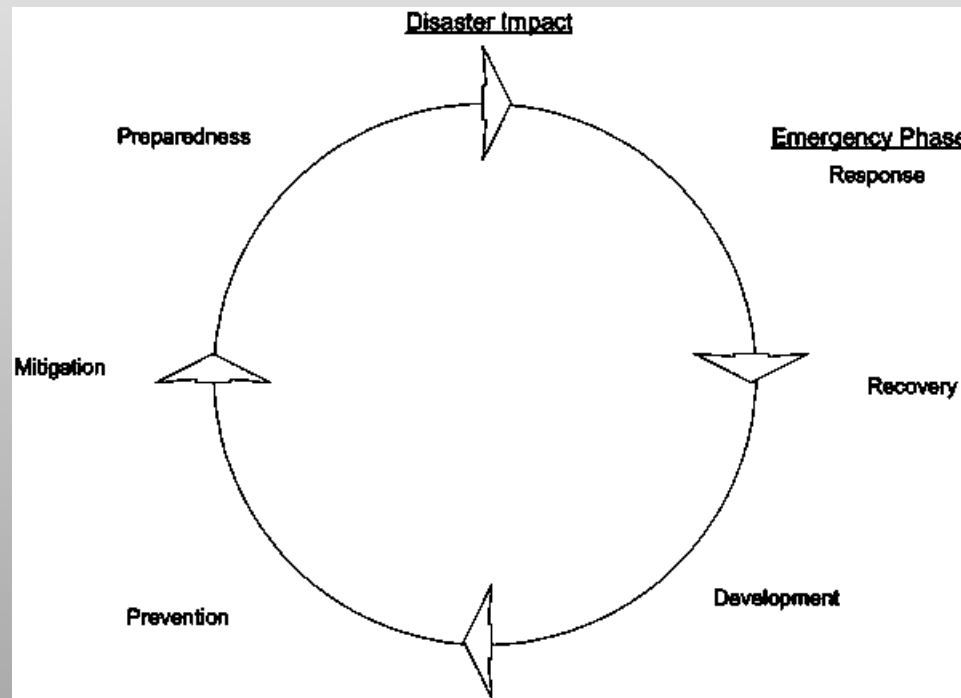




# Environment in humanitarian assistance operations

## Immediate

- e.g. acute waste, industrial issues relevant to human lives and response efforts



## Medium-long term

- important but non-acute issues – recovery, rehabilitation





## Institutional overview

- **OCHA has U.N. response mandate, UNEP has specialized expertise.**
- **Governments create Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit to address acute response phase environmental issues.**
- **UNEP & development agencies deal with longer-term recovery and rehabilitation issues.**





## Joint Unit and Response

- Created by governments in 1994.
- *Mobilize & coordinate response to technological disasters, and natural disasters with major environmental impacts.*
- Integrates humanitarian assistance and environmental perspectives in response.

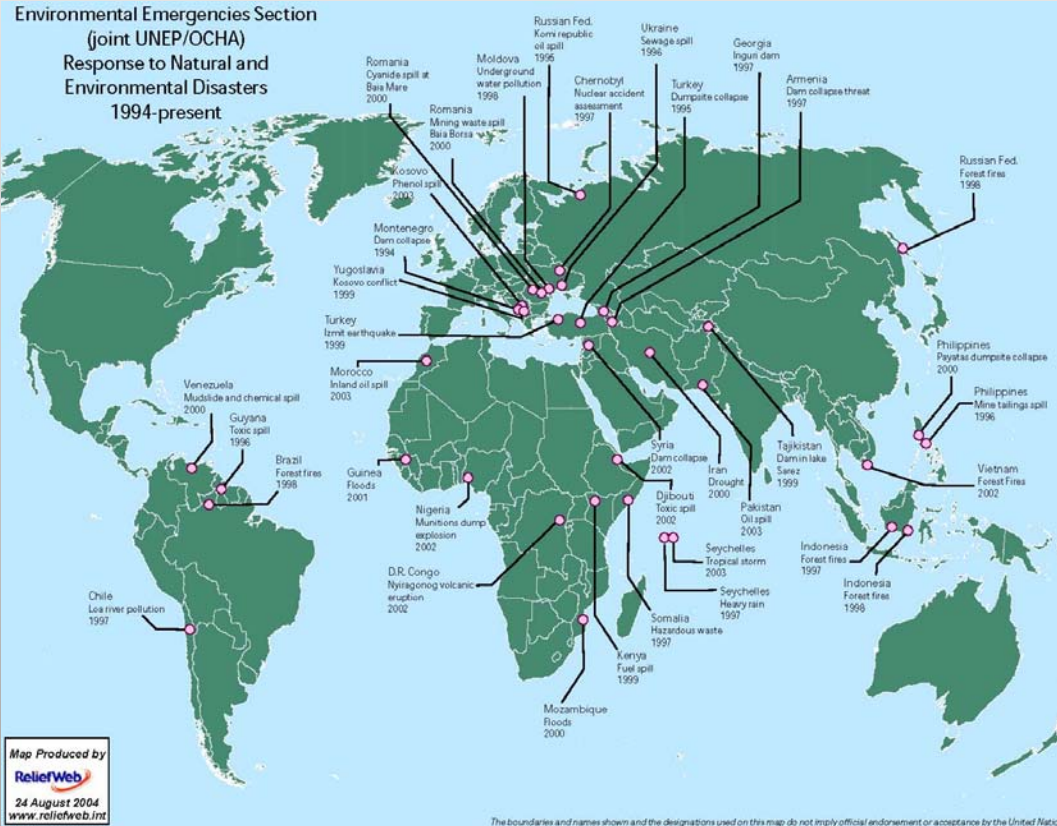






# Joint Unit: Global partners and reach

- UN agencies
- NGOs
- Private sector
- National governments
- Regional commissions



- forest fires
- conflicts
- mining tailings leak
- fuel spill
- pesticides
- floods
- dumpsite collapse
- hurricanes





## Recent Joint Unit Action

- **Tsunami Crisis**
- **Caribbean Hurricanes**
- **Darfur crisis**
- **DR Congo**
- **Philippines**
- **Tanzania**
- ✓ **Joint Unit ensures acute environmental issues are addressed in humanitarian response.**





## **‘Bridging gaps’ through Partnerships**

### **OCHA-UNEP Environmental Emergencies Partnership (EEP)**

- Ensures better collaboration between stakeholders & across disciplines
- Links prevention, preparedness and response.
- Focus is on practical action that respond to partner needs.





## EEP in practice

- **Practical projects**
  - Newsletter, training, harmonizing emergency reporting.
  - New partners: governments, research institutes, private sector...
  - Invitation to assist Environmental Emergencies Center development.
- **Catalyst for action**
  - Build multi-disciplinary networks & dialogue: e.g. UNHCR, CARE, UNV ...
- **EEP & tsunamis**
  - Range of activities proposed with partners.





## Much remains to be done: WCDR is where the work can start.

- Disasters increasing in frequency and magnitude with majority of impact on world's poorest.
- Countries and stakeholders want integrated & collaborative approaches.
- Need to build on what is in place.





## Next steps

- Specific action for increased coordination and collaboration.
- Opportunities: Incorporating lessons from past emergencies into prevention, preparedness.
- Bringing partners together to address ‘forgotten emergencies.’
- Engaging non-traditional partners e.g. private sector





## Contact information

- **Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit**
  - [www.ochaonline.un.org/ochaunep](http://www.ochaonline.un.org/ochaunep)
- **Environmental Emergencies Partnership**
  - [www.humanitarianinfo.org/eep](http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/eep)

