



World Conference on Disaster Reduction
18-22 January 2005, Kobe, Hyogo, Japan

Common statement of the
Special Session on the
Indian Ocean Disaster:
risk reduction for a safer future

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*Extract from the final report of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction
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Annex II

Common statement of the Special Session on the Indian Ocean Disaster: risk reduction for a safer future

The World Conference on Disaster Reduction,

Extending its deepest sympathies and condolences to the victims of the recent tsunami disaster and their families and to the people and Governments of those countries, and expressing our deepest concern over the negative economic, social, psychological, environmental and other consequences and impacts of the tsunami disaster,

Commending the national and international community's prompt and generous support and contributions to the relief efforts, which truly reflect the spirit of solidarity and commitment to addressing challenges facing mankind in a collective and collaborative manner,

Recalling General Assembly resolutions 57/256 of 6 February 2003, 58/214 and 58/215 of 23 December 2003, and 59/231 and 59/233 of 22 December 2004 on natural disasters and vulnerability and the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction,

Recalling also that in its resolution 58/214 the Assembly recommended the implementation of the outcomes of the Second International Conference on Early Warning, held under the auspices of the United Nations at Bonn, Germany, from 16 to 18 October 2003,

Recalling further the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in Yokohama, Japan, from 23 to 27 May 1994,

Recognizing that severe natural hazards such as earthquakes, floods, typhoons, cyclones, droughts and tsunamis respect no borders and remain major threats to all people, and hinder social and economic progress, in particular in the developing countries,

Recognizing also the importance of national and local capacity building to effectively address the impact of disasters,

Emphasizing the importance of continued international and regional dialogue and discussion in order to build understanding, solidarity and commitment to improve early warning systems and to reduce disasters,

Emphasizing the need to comprehensively assess all the lessons learnt from the tsunami disaster,

Emphasizing also the Special Leaders' Meeting of the Association of South-East Asian Nations on the Aftermath of the Earthquake and Tsunamis, held in Jakarta on 6 January 2005, which agreed to establish a regional early warning system such as a Regional Tsunami Early Warning Centre on the Indian Ocean and the South-East Asia region,

Taking note of the outcomes of the United Nations Conference to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Mauritius from 10 to 14 January 2005, and in particular the support expressed at the Conference for a global early warning system,

Responding to the request to launch a process to establish a regional early warning system, including for tsunami, by the resumed session of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly,

Noting the proposals to expedite the development of a global tsunami early warning capability, to include the Indian Ocean, drawing on the experience of existing regional tsunami warning system in the Pacific Ocean.

Noting also the proposals for establishing tsunami early warning systems already under consideration as announced by individual countries of the Indian Ocean region,

Taking note of the discussions and conclusions of the special session on the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster at this World Conference on Disaster Reduction and the need to coordinate and examine expeditiously the various proposals made in this context, taking into account the findings of the thematic sessions held during the Conference,

Emphasizes the importance of regional cooperation and coordination in disaster reduction, including enhanced institutional arrangements, technical cooperation based on most effective technical equipment and capacity building to effectively address the impact of natural disasters;

Recognizes the urgent need, as evidenced by the devastation caused by the earthquake and the tsunami in the Indian Ocean, to strengthen national systems and to expand existing mechanisms for sharing of information and best practices in disaster detection, early warning, prevention, and assessment of natural disasters and for disaster relief, post-disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction;

Recommends that necessary regional disaster reduction mechanisms be established and strengthened as soon as possible for all relevant natural hazards, which should include, *inter alia*, specialized collaborative regional centres, networks for information exchange, early warning systems, establishment of databases and knowledge management, use of modern science and technology, and strategies to reduce disaster risks and to reduce impacts arising from natural disasters;

Recognizes also that early warning systems consist of (a) prior knowledge of the risks faced by communities, (b) technical monitoring and warning service for these risks, (c) dissemination of understandable warnings to those at risk, and (d) knowledge, public awareness and preparedness to act;

Invites the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations funds and programmes, United Nations specialized organizations and other international organizations and institutions, to integrate regional disaster reduction strategies into their work programmes and to develop concrete initiatives to implement such strategies;

Emphasizes the need for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction to identify, analyse and widely disseminate all the lessons learnt from the recent tsunami disaster;

Requests the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction to prepare a report on regional mechanisms for disaster reduction, taking into consideration initiatives and ongoing discussion or arrangements in respective regions and sub-regions, if any, and to submit it to the 2005 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council and the sixtieth session of the General Assembly;

Requests the Economic and Social Council to include regional disaster reduction mechanisms into the agenda of the humanitarian affairs segment of its 2005 substantive session;

Invites the Secretary-General to include regional mechanisms for disaster reduction in the agenda of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly and to submit a report thereon to the General Assembly;

Welcomes the priority to be placed on disaster reduction, including early warning, at the Third Earth Observation Summit at the Ministerial level, to be held in Brussels on 16 February 2005;

Welcomes the proposed convening of a Ministerial Meeting on Regional Cooperation on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangements by the Government of Thailand, to be held at Phuket on 28 and 29 January 2005, which aims to lend further political impetus to the relevant outcomes of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction and to mobilize necessary resources for the establishment of tsunami early warning systems in the Indian Ocean;

Welcomes the generous offer by Germany to host a United Nations conference on early warning in Bonn in early 2006 and invites Member States, all relevant United Nations organisations, funds and programmes and relevant international and regional organizations, supported by the Platform for the Promotion of Early Warning to participate, with the following objectives: (a) to implement the International Early Warning Programme, proposed at the Second International Conference on Early Warning, held at Bonn, Germany, from 16 to 18 October 2003, and launched at the present World Conference, (b) to identify priority areas for the implementation of early warning systems, taking into account the vulnerabilities of countries to the different hazards, the current status of their warning systems, including the ongoing support, technical and institutional capacities, engagement of relevant actors, and shortcomings, gaps and barriers to implementation, and (c) to assess and monitor the implementation of early warning systems, including the development and use of guidelines, criteria and benchmarking for effective early warning systems;

Recognizes the need to use the experience of the existing Pacific Ocean tsunami early warning systems, making use of the existing coordination mechanisms of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and other relevant international and regional organisations, utilizing the planning process of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems under the intergovernmental Group on Earth Observations, and including comprehensive actions such as the assessment of tsunami risks, including a range of advanced technical systems (for example satellite based, high precision dynamic sea level measurements and buoys that provide real time measurements of seismic and oceanographic parameters), as well as the detection and warning of hazardous events, the development of response plans, public education programmes, and resilient shelters, lifelines and protective infrastructure;

Calls for the establishment of an effective and durable tsunami early warning system for the Indian ocean;

Emphasizes that a tsunami early warning system for the Indian Ocean must be tailored to the specific circumstances of the Indian Ocean and the individual requirements of countries, under the coordination of the United Nations, and that those countries must be the ones to determine the shape and nature of the system;

Recommends that elements of a forward strategy to establish an Indian Ocean tsunami early warning system can include a preparatory technical scoping meeting, assessment of needs in countries of the Indian Ocean, if requested by those countries, regional seminars and coordination meetings, as necessary, a regional planning conference, and the preparation and dissemination of public awareness and other appropriate material;

Appreciates the steps taken or to be taken by countries of the Indian Ocean to provide for interim tsunami early warning in the Indian Ocean;

Commends the many generous offers of financial and technical assistance made by key countries across the globe to help establish a tsunami early warning system for the Indian Ocean.



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