



EWCI



Second International Conference on Early Warning

Integrating early warning of natural disasters into public policy

First Announcement



International Strategy
ISDR
for Disaster Reduction

16-18 October 2003
Bonn, Germany



Federal Foreign Office

Introduction

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, disasters are increasingly affecting societies worldwide, draining humanitarian efforts and resources that could be better used for development initiatives. The fact that more people and their assets are found in exposed areas to natural hazards, and that the frequency and intensity of these extreme events are increasing due to climate change, reiterates the urgent need for the development and implementation of effective early warning strategies and systems.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held 26 August-6 September 2002 in Johannesburg, called for a greater commitment to include disaster and risk reduction in particular the development and strengthening of early warning systems and networks within sustainable development policies and action plans.

The 1998 Potsdam International Conference on Early Warning Systems for the Reduction of Natural Disasters (EWC'98) emphasised early warning as a core component of national and international prevention strategies for the 21st Century. The Second International Conference on Early Warning (EWCII) will build upon the principles developed at EWC'98 through the identification of emerging trends and new threats, such as climate change and variability, as well as review their implications in the development of early warning systems.

The EWCII will also provide a timely input to two policy frameworks for the effective application of early warning systems worldwide: the implementation of WSSD outcomes, and the review of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action to be completed by 2004.

Rationale

Through the development of new information technologies and the rapid spread of global communications, data has become more readily accessible and forecasting methodologies have made significant progress. Improvements in global observation systems including earth observations and remote sensing have also enhanced the early detection of medium-term abnormal climactic conditions such as El Niño events, and contribute to warnings of long-term hazards associated with environmental change.

To give but a few examples:

- Forecast time and location of landfall of tropical cyclones is now 48 hours in advance
- Warning time of tornadoes has doubled in one decade
- Warnings of drought are now issued several months in advance
- The detection of medium-term El Niño and climate change effects has been enhanced

However, the ability to deliver this vital information to communities affected by disasters has not always enjoyed similar success. The ultimate objective of an early warning system is not to simply issue a timely forecast; rather, it is to *protect lives and property*.

Local mechanisms for communicating risk, or 'downscaling' the interpretation of alerts to relate to local conditions or experience, remain very weak in many cases. Sophistication must be weighed against local capacities, needs, resources and traditions.

Furthermore, data about the adverse impacts of disasters on people and infrastructure (for example, vulnerability and risk assessment) necessary to make informed decisions is often complete or absent. Even in some cases where abilities and procedures do exist, communities are unable to respond appropriately to them due to lack of planning, resources, or viable protective options that they can utilise in a timely manner.

Objectives

The EWCII will build upon the ongoing dialogue on early warning issues and best practices at the global and regional and local levels, enhancing the strengthened coordination and cooperation to integrate activities, interests and expertise of the various sectors involved in the early warning process. These are perceived as prerequisite to successfully integrate early warning of natural disasters into public policy.

In this context, the objectives of the EWCII are:

- Support and assess the effectiveness of early warning processes at the global, regional and national levels since EWC'98, and identify issues that may have hindered or prevented intended implementation initiatives
- Assist authorities to develop the legal, institutional, financial and political frameworks required to implement long-term early warning systems based on case studies and success stories
- Develop approaches for sharing early warning knowledge and experience, including training and other capacity building activities utilising technological aspects such as the Internet and other means of information access, exchange and dissemination
- Document and share current and future techniques relevant for early warning, vulnerability and risk assessment strategies, data collection and management including space-based and associated terrestrial remote sensing technology.

Programme

The EWCII programme comprises a series of plenary and parallel sessions of oral and poster presentations, with the working language of the conference being English (with simultaneous interpretation into French and Spanish).

The EWCII will address a broad range of actors in the early warning chain. It will allow an interaction to take place between experts in early warning systems and decision makers, politicians, public authorities, non-governmental community leaders, educators and the media.

The number of participants in EWCII is limited to 200. If necessary the EWCII Steering Committee reserves the right to make a final selection to ensure balance based on the diversity of the issues and regional distribution of participants and organizations.

More detailed information including the EWCII agenda, programme content and registration documentation will be circulated from June 2003. To ensure your name is included on the EWCII mailing list, please complete the reply form and return it to the EWCII Conference Secretariat by 15 June 2003.

Regional consultations and workshops

The EWCII will build upon regional consultations and workshops undertaken by key partners and national institutions in the lead up to the Conference, planned in the Americas, Africa, Asia/Pacific and Europe. For more information on regional activities please contact UN/ISDR.

Invitation

You are invited to participate in this conference and share your experience and knowledge. We welcome contributions for oral and poster presentations dealing with the themes mentioned below in an integrative manner, between disciplines, at various levels and related to the political responsibilities, public participation and knowledge, technical identification and monitoring of hazards and communications, data and information management for effective early warning, as well as institutional capacities to react to warnings.

Theme I: Emerging Issues

Identification of emerging issues and trends in early warning and types of risk (hazards and vulnerability factors).

Theme II: Early Warning & Sustainable Development

Identification and discussion of examples where knowledge and experience have been applied to implement early warning schemes and programmes in the context of disaster risk reduction and sustainable development.

Theme III: Sustaining the Early Warning Dialogue

Identification of needs (local, national, regional and international) to ensure the sustainability of advocacy, information, networking and research programmes for early warning.

▲ EWCII Advisory Group and Steering Committee

▲ The EWCII is hosted by the Government of Germany under the auspices of the United Nations and supported by the Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR). The Conference is also supported by an Advisory Group of various international experts and a Steering Committee of a selection of UN and international organization representatives as well as other key actors in early warning.

The EWCII Steering Committee is composed of representatives from the following organizations:

- Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)
- German Committee for Disaster Reduction (DKKV)
- Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR)
- International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Germany
- Munich Reinsurance (MunichRe)
- UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
- UN Development Programme Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (UNDP/BCPR)
- UN Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE)
- UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- UN Environment Programme (UNEP)
- UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UN/OOSA)
- UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
- UN Volunteers Programme (UNV)
- World Food Programme (WFP)
- World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

Contact Information

For all EWCII enquiries please contact:

UN Inter-Agency Secretariat of the
International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR)
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 917 27 62
Fax: +41 22 917 05 63
Email: isdr@un.org

A website with updated information on EWCII will soon be accessible via www.unisdr.org and www.dkkv.org.

For background information and proceedings of the Potsdam International
Conference on Early Warning held 7-11 September 1998 in
Potsdam, Germany (EWC'98) please refer to:
www.gfz-potsdam.de/ewc98



Reply Form

Please type or print in English in BLOCK CAPITALS.

Prof. Dr. Mr. Ms.

Family Name _____

Given Name _____

Organization _____

Department _____

Address _____

Postal Code _____ City _____

Country _____

Telephone _____

Fax _____

E-mail _____

Please send me further information/updates for EWCII

I would like to submit an abstract for:

Oral presentation

Poster presentation

Please refer to Abstract Guidelines overleaf.

I would like to request financial support* for travel and accommodation during EWCII
Please attach supporting documentation

* Funding for travel and accommodation will be provided for a limited number of participants from developing countries upon request. Priority will be given to public authorities from developing countries.



Abstract Guidelines

It is requested that abstracts for both oral and poster presentations be submitted for consideration for the EWCII. Authors will receive a confirmation of receipt, and in July 2003 will receive a letter advising acceptance or rejection for the abstract's inclusion in EWCII.

Submission: Abstracts should be submitted electronically via e-mail or on floppy disk accompanied by the reply form to the EWCII Conference Secretariat by **15 June 2003**

Theme: Abstracts should clearly indicate the theme to which the presentation relates

Length: 500 words

Language: English

Format: MS Word

Please mail abstracts and the reply form to:

EWCII Conference Secretariat
German Committee for Disaster Reduction (DKKV)
Tulpenfeld 4, D-53113
Bonn, Germany
Tel: +49 228 243 48 79
Fax: +49 228 243 48 36
miketta@dkkv.org