

Final Remarks, Co-Chair EWC III

Salvano Briceno, Director ISDR secretariat

29 March 2006

Ladies and gentlemen

This has been a truly unique event. No other forum has ever brought together so many stakeholders from such a wide range of early warning backgrounds from throughout the world.

We came to learn, to contribute knowledge and experience, to expand our networks of colleagues, and most particularly to see what we can do to turn the concepts of early warning into effective action.

President Clinton's presence highlighted the importance of our task. He challenged us to use our early warning knowledge to reduce the impacts of natural hazards and to help the poor and the vulnerable.

At the Roundtable on Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Response Systems, which was held in conjunction with the Conference, with President Clinton as the special guest, several initiatives were announced, including an ISDR system-brokered package of advisory support to Indian Ocean countries.

We have just heard summaries of the Conference working sessions from Mrs Schwaetzer and Sir Trevor MacDonald. The need to develop a strong people-centred approach to early warning is very clear, and it must remain a primary focus for the future.

But in pursuing this goal, we should not forget the fundamental importance of quality science and technology. Science and technology is advancing rapidly and its use must go hand in hand with the consideration of human needs.

Now the question in all our minds is – what should happen next? How can we move this agenda forward?

The Hyogo Framework 2005-2015 has been repeatedly noted as the essential road map forward – for good reason – it is based on an assessment of decades of experience in risk reduction and was agreed by 168 countries after painstaking debate and negotiation.

Early warning, with its associated risk assessment, is a key priority of the Hyogo Framework. But equally, early warning needs the help of the framework's other priorities – particularly in terms of political commitment and institutional capacity for risk reduction, the use of knowledge, innovation and education, and the pursuit of disaster preparedness.

The community represented in this room today therefore has a critical role to play in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework.

Please actively work with your counterparts and in your national platforms – with experts, NGOs, educators, broadcasters, etc – to integrate early warning into your country's risk reduction policies and programmes.

The Global Survey of Early Warning Systems, which was launched at the Conference on Monday by Mr Jan Egeland, provides another primary source of guidance.

It recommends the establishment of a global early warning system – perhaps more accurately a system of systems – covering all hazards and communities.

This is a new and challenging task. A task that is in tune with the needs and capabilities of this decade - a task that the early warning community has the knowledge and the confidence to undertake and achieve over the remaining 8 and a half years of the Hyogo Framework.

Please join forces to interpret, apply and extend the Survey's recommendations in your areas of work, at local, national and international levels.

The results of this conference, through the sessions, the checklist, and the compendium of project proposals also need to be followed up.

The ISDR system – which comprises the full range of committed partners inside and outside the UN – is gearing up to take on the job of implementing the Hyogo Framework. There will be widened participation of governments and organizations. An overall work plan will integrate the activities and commitments of all ISDR system partners.

Early warning issues and inputs to this process will be coordinated under the International Early Warning Programme (IEWP) that was launched at Kobe.

You may have noticed that the logo adopted by the Conference was that of the IEWP – reflecting the fact that the IEWP was a child of the previous international early warning conferences and is also expected to carry forward the results of this third early warning conference.

The ISDR secretariat has already begun to consult with partners on how to energise the programme and its supporting Platform here in Bonn as a strong international mechanism for stakeholders to pursue collaborative action on early warning.

The ISDR secretariat will endeavour to follow up on the numerous suggestions and questions voiced at the Conference. In particular, many people have asked about the follow up action on the project proposals that were submitted to the Conference and recorded in the compendium document that you received in your conference bag.

First let me say how gratified we were with the enthusiastic response to the call. Over 104 proposals passed the first screening and were sent to external review by international experts. This process was managed by the early warning platform. The Conference organisers also took steps to promote the projects with donors, including visits to a number of world capitals.

Several positive connections have been made, including the project in Tonga that will be supported by the Munich Re Foundation, as announced on Monday.

But I would like to see many more projects supported. They deserve to be. I am happy to tell you that the ISDR secretariat through PPEW has decided to capitalize on the efforts to date and will continue to maintain the projects database and to promote the projects with donors over the coming year. You can access and explore the database through the ISDR-PPEW website.

Of course, donors will need some time to evaluate the project database and to consider which projects fit their programmes and policies. We will encourage them to do so, and can provide them with detailed information if they need it. We will seek to ensure coordination among the donor efforts.

We also stand ready to help individual project submitters to improve their proposals where donors show an interest.

In this respect, please that note the role of PPEW is like a marriage broker – we can strongly encourage a relationship, but we cannot force the marriage and we certainly have no money to pay for the wedding ceremony!

Now, on behalf of the United Nations system, I would like to offer a very large vote of thanks to all those who made this wonderful conference possible. It has been an exciting and well run conference, with many innovative features and a strong focus on achieving concrete results. Thanks go

- To the Federal Foreign Office of Germany which has very substantially funded the conference making it possible for so many of you to attend and for us to achieve such useful results.
- To the City of Bonn, its mayor and her team, for their outstanding hospitality and for their support for the Mayors meeting on Sunday.
- To each of you as participants, who gave up other priorities to contribute the substance of the conference, especially the speakers, poster providers, expert advisers, exhibitors, sponsors, and moderators, who together provided the essential ingredients of success.
- To the local organizing committee, led by DKKV, the German disaster reduction committee, for the exceptionally smooth-running and well-supported conference logistics arrangements.
- And to the ISDR teams, the Conference Secretariat in Geneva and the Platform for the Promotion of Early Warning in Bonn, who brought the experience and expertise of the United Nations system, and of whom I am justly proud.

Finally, as we leave, with satisfaction in our hearts at a job well done, let us also remember why we came to Bonn – to make a difference – to help provide better protection for the poor and the vulnerable and for our neighbours, wherever we live. This is our responsibility - let us return home, more determined than ever, to play our part in achieving these goals.

Thank you, and safe journey home.