

Final Statement Third International Conference on Early Warning (EWC III)

Guided by the motto “from concept to action”, the Third International Conference on Early Warning (EWC III) took place in Bonn, Germany, from 27 to 29 March under the auspices of the United Nations. It convened more than 1,250 participants active in the field of early warning from 132 countries, including ministers, senior government officials, as well as representatives of international organizations, experts, and members of civil society.

Building on the two previous International Early Warning Conferences in 1998 and 2003, the Conference was an initiative of the German Government to respond to the devastating effects of the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004 and in the recognition that had an effective early warning system been in place, many lives would have been saved. Through its outcomes, the Conference contributed to the translation into concrete measures of the “Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters” adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in January 2005 in Kobe, Japan.

The Conference was opened by Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, German Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Jan Egeland, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. Ms. Katherine Sierra, Vice President of the World Bank, delivered a keynote address. The UN Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, President William J. Clinton, addressed the Conference as a special guest. The Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization, Mr. Michel Jarraud, opened the Scientific and Technical Symposium. The Mayor’s Conference convened in Bonn on 26 March delivered a message to EWC III.

The Conference’s two parallel streams complemented each other:

- The *Priorities and Projects Forum* was an interactive discussion, stimulated by moderators, on early warning projects in the three clusters of air, earth and water selected to illustrate best practices and experience.
- The *Scientific and Technical Symposium* showcased, through illustrative presentations, state of the art knowledge on multi-hazard approaches, mega-events and the socio-economic components of early warning.

A round table was held in the margins of the conference in the presence of President Clinton for delegates from the region affected by the Indian Ocean tsunami, donors and international organizations. They discussed the current status of the Indian Ocean tsunami early warning system and steps needed to fully establish it over the next year.

The Conference and its preparations resulted in the following documents:

- A “Compendium of Early Warning Projects” consisting of project proposals from all parts of the world, reviewed by experts.
- A tool for practitioners entitled “Developing Early Warning Systems: A Key Checklist”.

Through presentations, discussions and inputs at the Forum, in the Symposium, and in the workshops, the participants:

- Reiterated that effective early warning systems must be an integral part of disaster risk reduction strategies in national development frameworks and requires cooperation amongst many actors. Emphasis was placed on the important role of local communities, of increased regional cooperation, as well as of training, education and awareness-raising;
- Welcomed the Global Survey of Early Warning Systems requested by the UN Secretary-General and encouraged all partners to act upon its recommendations;
- Welcomed the “Compendium of Early Warning Projects” as a catalogue of valuable projects to be promoted by the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction system (ISDR) and invited potential donors to support their implementation;
- Acknowledged existing support provided to early warning and called for additional financial resources in this area, recognizing the cost-effectiveness of investing in disaster risk reduction;
- Encouraged national governments, local communities and agencies to utilise the Early Warning Checklist when developing and evaluating their early warning systems;
- Underlined the need for further scientific research to better address early warnings and future risks, developing multi-hazard approaches, with a special focus on people at risk, their vulnerability and their socio-cultural context;
- Recognized the need to further mobilize political commitment, to expand the dialogue on early warning and to fill identified gaps in early warning capacities, and therefore encouraged the strengthening of the International Early Warning Programme (IEWP) and its Platform for the Promotion of Early Warning, as part of the reformed ISDR system and to facilitate the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action;
- Encouraged the wide dissemination of the outcomes of the Conference.

Finally, participants expressed their sincere gratitude to the Government of Germany, to the German National Platform for Disaster Reduction (DKKV) and the ISDR secretariat for organizing the Conference, and thanked the City of Bonn for their warm welcome.

Bonn, 29 March 2006