



Mayors' Conference on Early Warning 26th March 2006

on the occasion of the Third International Conference on Early Warning

When disasters strike in any region of the world, it is at the local level where the impacts are first felt, and therefore where the initial response has to start. This undeniable fact, when considered in the context of disaster preparedness, then leads to the conclusion that early warning as well as disaster management efforts must also include such local levels.

In recent years the global community involved in disaster reduction has been recognizing the need of efforts targeting disaster reduction and preparedness to recognize this fact. The Bonn Declaration emanating from the Second Early Warning Conference in 2003 called on nations and agencies to promote people-centered early warning as a key strategy. The recent Hyogo Declaration, the newest mandate in the global arena and in particular for the International Strategy on Disaster Reduction (UN - ISDR) emerging from the World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in Kobe, Japan, in January 2005, calls on governments and agencies to empower local administrations and target resources at this level as a pillar for disaster reduction, and hence sustainable development.

Therefore, it is imperative for the Third International Conference on Early Warning to recognize these calls for action, and start from the onset with a clear strategy that outlines efforts to build the resilience of nations at its roots: the communities. If warnings are to be reacted to in an efficient and timely manner, national level agencies must synergize efforts with municipal and regional administrations to make sure that reliable warnings are issued to the people and that the people have the required awareness on how to react to such warnings. Such efforts must include the recognition of the political leadership of municipal governments and the responsibilities thereof, and find ways to:

- Integrate international and national-level efforts with municipal district plans for disaster preparedness, seeking a complementary role within the various agencies that must coordinate and execute the response in case of disasters.
- Enhance the communications between levels, agencies, and sectors to disseminate information warnings which recognize the municipal district role in this respect as an authority and as the initial agency with the responsibility for the security of its citizens.

- Synergize the capacities of local universities and NGO's with resources stemming from the national and international levels to identify risks associated with all types of hazards and to develop early warning systems and disaster management practices which target such hazards.

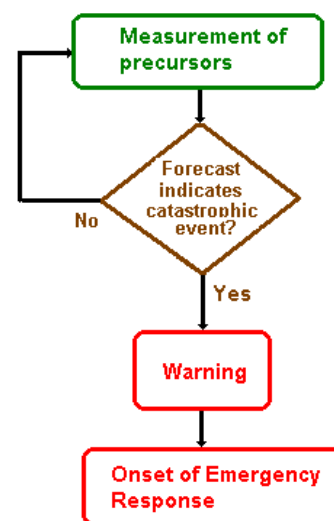
Inter-level Integration: linking efforts among all stakeholders

Natural phenomena usually span vast geographical regions, and thus, it has been the traditional mandate of scientific and technical agencies at the national level to monitor and analyze such phenomena. In the context of early warning, such institutions usually carry out the initial two of the four segments of the early warning chain: *monitoring of phenomena* and *forecasting of potentially catastrophic events*.

Recognizing the efficiency of the system in terms of saving lives and reducing losses, a warning must then be conveyed from these technical institutions to the population which has to react in an anticipatory fashion and evacuate to safe areas.

Considering the role of municipal and district administrations, including local decision makers, in coordinating the response efforts, as well as the safety and security of its citizens, it is then imperative that this warning process also involves such local administrations.

Therefore, the Mayors' Conference on Early Warning calls on all participants in this conference to encourage efforts which synergize the role of national level agencies with local administrations in order to promote efficient and timely early warning systems.



Information Management: the Key to Success

Recognizing the vital role that communications and information management plays in the early warning process, it is imperative that early warning efforts target this topic. Issues to be addressed within Third International Conference on Early Warning should target:

- The need for discussions and constant information exchanges between scientific and technical agencies and local administrations regarding phenomena which manifest themselves in the particular regions which are the political responsibility of local administrations. The information flow must include efforts at systematizing such natural phenomena, current advances and existing limitations regarding the monitoring of precursors, as well as the limitations regarding scientific forecasts based on probabilities in many cases.

- How best to integrate the various local divisions, programs, and resources, with the national-level resources allocated to the early warning process. These efforts should also include information exchange regarding international conferences, as well as opportunities to request technical assistance targeting the local level.

Synergizing local capacities with national and international resources

At times overlooked, local resources at a city or district level including universities and research centers, as well as municipal planning agencies and other local agencies, possess relevant and pertinent information that is useful for the design and establishment of early warning systems.

The Mayors' Conference then calls on participants to the conference, as well as all relevant agencies devoted to issues of early warning to promote the integration of local social capital, as well as local resources in the design and implementation of early warning systems. With proper guidance, such local resources can target:

- Risks assessments necessary to complement the early warning process, and as a basis for the long-term risk management processes required for sustainable development.
- Identification of capacities and limitations of local stakeholders on which to build a sustainable system in terms of routine operation, maintenance, and future improvements.

Identification of means and ways to disseminate warnings to all affected members of the communities in an efficient and timely fashion.

The Mayors' Conference on Early Warning recognizes the mandate and the responsibility that local administrations bear regarding the safety and security of its citizens. Considering the relevance of early warning to these issues of safety and security, Mayors and Governors around the world look forward to efforts and outcomes emanating from this conference and extend their wishes to the organizing committee and all participants for a very successful and productive conference in Bonn in the following days.