



Third International Conference on Early Warning
27-29 March 2006, Bonn, Germany

PRESS RELEASE

THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EARLY WARNING OPENS IN BONN

(Bonn: 27 March 2006): More than 1,200 participants from 140 countries will gather today in Bonn for the Third International Conference on Early Warning to discuss the importance of early warning systems in reducing disasters.

More than 200 million people are affected every year by natural hazards, and adequate early warning systems are recognized as the best way to save lives.

Hosted by the Government of Germany under the auspices of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the three-day conference will be divided into two parallel streams: a Projects and Priorities Forum in plenary, where some 15 projects will illustrate the relevance of early warning systems, and a Scientific and Technical Symposium, which will be attended by scientists and practitioners of early warnings.

“Early warning and preparedness are essential in preventing loss of lives and property due to natural hazards. This action-oriented conference will be an opportunity to highlight, through the presentation of projects in the field, the importance of early warning mechanisms for people’s daily lives,” said Jan Egeland, United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, who will address the conference. He will present a report on a Global Survey of Early Warning Systems, called for by the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in January 2005 in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami.

Former US President Clinton will participate in the Bonn conference in his capacity as UN Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery.

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Early warning is a critical element of the wider disaster reduction agenda and an integral part of President Clinton's "build back better" framework. In addressing the forum, the former President will urge all actors to commit themselves to implementing risk reduction measures and accelerate the necessary shift towards a 'culture of prevention'.

He will also update the audience on the status of the tsunami recovery effort in the affected countries.

Among the conference's concrete expected outcomes is the establishment of a checklist of practical actions that will help countries and communities in developing effective people-centred early warning systems; a compendium of some 100 early warning projects for possible funding and implementation in all parts of the world; and the establishment of long-term mechanisms to disseminate information about activities and gaps in early warning around the world. The conference is intended to serve as a reference for practitioners and for future work in the early warning area.

"We can only effectively counter the global threat posed by natural hazards within a multilateral framework and with a long-term strategy. Germany has already hosted two other conferences on early warning. The conference's motto, "from concept to action", shows that we want to contribute to real progress in improving early warning systems worldwide - to save lives" said the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who will open the conference.

The 3-day conference will complete its work on 29 March, with the issuance of a final statement on the importance of early warning in disaster risk reduction.

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