



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

PRESS RELEASE

THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EARLY WARNING

Local communities are key to effective early warning systems

(Bonn: 29 March 2006): The Third International Conference on Early Warning convened in Bonn, Germany, ended this morning after three days of substantive discussions on how to make early warning systems a practical reality to communities.

“The need to develop a strong people-centred approach to early warning is very clear and must remain a primary focus for the future, said Salvano Briceno, director of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction in his closing speech. In pursuing this goal, we should not forget the fundamental importance of quality science and technology. Science and technology are advancing rapidly and must go hand in hand with the human needs.”

The role of local communities in effective early warning was strongly emphasized by all participants. They encouraged increased regional cooperation as well as better communication tailored to people’s needs, more training, community preparedness, education and awareness raising to better protect the most vulnerable people.

Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, German Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs whose government was hosting the conference emphasized the importance of early warning in a world facing an increasing number of natural hazards and reiterated the commitments of his government to early warning. Mr. Jan Egeland, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs urged the 1,200 participants active in the field of early warning to accelerate actions to further strengthen the resilience of nations and local communities to natural hazards. Ms. Katherine Sierra, Vice-President of the World Bank underlined the role of “end-to-end” early warning systems. The UN Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery President William J. Clinton recalled the importance of community level preparedness and the need to use our early warning knowledge to reduce the impacts of natural hazards.

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A people-centred approach to make early warning systems more efficient and better understood by communities is one of the main conclusions of the discussions held in the two parallel streams of the conference: the Priorities and Projects Forum and the Scientific and Technical Symposium. The latter was opened by Mr Michel Jarraud, Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organisation.

The conference and its preparatory process produced two main outcomes: a “Compendium of Early Warning Projects” consisting of project proposals from all parts of the world and an “Early Warning Checklist”, a tool for practitioners to improve the effectiveness of existing early warning systems.

In their final statement, participants reiterated that effective early warning must be an integral part of disaster risk reduction strategies in national development frameworks. They welcomed the UN Secretary-General’s report on the Global Survey of Early Warning Systems presented by Jan Egeland in the opening session. The survey contains many specific recommendations to fill gaps and to strengthen national and local capacities and recommends the establishment of a global early warning system rooted in existing early warning systems and capacities covering all hazards and communities. They called for additional financial resources in this area and recognized the cost-effectiveness of investing in prevention and disaster risk reduction. They encouraged the development of the International Early Warning Programme (IEPW) as mechanisms to facilitate the process. The ISDR secretariat has already begun to consult with partners on how to energise the programme and its supporting Platform in Bonn as the international stakeholder mechanism to pursue collaborative action on early warning and to maintain the project database and promote the projects with donors.

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