

IASC Weekly Meeting
26 January 2005
Notes



1: Briefing on the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe
(by Ricardo Mena, OCHA)

Mr. Ricardo Mena, Humanitarian Affairs Officer in OCHA's Asia, Pacific, Americas and Caribbean Section briefed on the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) in Kobe, 18-22 January 2005. Mr. Mena participated in the conference and returned on Sunday, 23 January from Kobe.

Marking the 10th anniversary of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, and following the recent earthquake-tsunami in the Indian Ocean, the WCDR was well attended by approximately 4,000 participants, including representatives from 168 governments with more than 40 ministers, 78 UN specialized agencies and observer organizations, 161 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and 562 journalists from 154 media outlets.

Generally, it was a very successful conference, which happened to come out very timely after the Tsunami, and that was excellently hosted by Japan.

The structure of the conference was as follows:

- The Intergovernmental Segment. All the outcome documents were discussed here and over 120 countries and 13 intergovernmental and regional organizations made general statements.
- Thematic segment, including 5 thematic clusters each comprising of 5-6 technical sessions as well as three High-level round table discussions.
- The Public Forum, with exhibition booths, poster sessions and workshops.
- A special session on the Indian Ocean Tsunami Disaster, where discussion took place, among other issues, on global early warning systems.

Outcome/Products of the conference – main documents:

- Review of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World
- Programme outcome document - Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters: Hyogo Framework for action 2005–2015 (final version is to be adopted and approved by the UN GA)
The document consists of three main sections: 1) WCDR: Objectives, expected outcome and strategic goals; 2) Priorities for Action 2005-2015 and; 3) Implementation and Follow-up.
- Hyogo Declaration (adopted)

Around 150 NGOs endorsed a general declaration at the WCDR that was promoted by IFRC.

Mr. Mena referred participants to the WCDR's website at www.unisdr.org/wcdr, where a full summary of the conference is accessible together with all relevant documents.

The discussion following the briefing touched upon the subject of early warning systems and the problems of global standardised implementation, the UN SG's appointment of a special envoy to the Tsunami rehabilitation/recovery efforts as well as the human rights aspects of the WCDR outcome.

2: Briefing on the floods in Guyana (by Masayo Kondo, OCHA)

Ms. Masayo Kondo, Humanitarian Affairs Officer in OCHA's Asia, Pacific, Americas and Caribbean Section, gave a briefing on the floods in Guyana.

After heavy rains for the last four weeks and torrential rains from 14 to 16 January, Guyana's capital Georgetown as well as coastal villages were struck by floods. According to the national authorities, around 150,000 people have been affected by the floods so far.

OCHA has been alerted of the situation since Wednesday, 19 January 2005. On Thursday, 20 January, the government appealed to the international community to provide humanitarian assistance.

OCHA decided to send an UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) Team on Saturday, 22 January, and released its Emergency Cash Grant of USD 50,000 for the purchase of inflatable boats with motors.

As leader of the UNDAC Team, the OCHA Regional Disaster Response Advisor based in Panama was deployed to Guyana on Sunday, 23 January.

Furthermore, a Virtual Operations On_Site Coordination Center (Virtual OSOCC) for Guyana has been set up. The UN Resident Coordinator (UN RC) has convened a meeting to discuss the current situation with the UN Country Team and the UNDAC Team Leader.

Regarding the national response, the Government in Guyana has set up a Joint Operations Center and five Emergency Sub-Committees dealing with health, water and sanitation, food security, shelters and infrastructure. The UN RC and national authorities met at the JOC, where the RC received a briefing on the current situation and presented the ToRs of the UNDAC mission.

Although it has not been raining for some days, floodwaters are still threatening to cause hardships. If the situation deteriorates, people would have to be evacuated from some areas, although it remains unclear where they could be located. Partly, people have armed themselves as the security situation is critical.

Following the briefing, the presence of international NGOs was questioned.

3: IASC Standard Briefing (by Manisha Thomas, ICVA)

- The IASC TF on Assistance to Tsunami affected communities will meet for another videoconference on Wednesday, 26 January, at 17h00 in Room III of the Palais des Nations. UNICEF will give a briefing on Water and Sanitation. The complete agenda will be sent to the Tsunami Focal Points shortly.
- The next meeting of the UNDG Task Team on Tsunami recovery will take place on Thursday, 27 January from 16h30 to 18h00 in Room III of the Palais des Nations

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List of Participants**



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