

Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction (ACDR) 2007

- Working Together for a Safer World -

Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan, 25-27 June 2007

Conference Summary

The Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction (ACDR) 2007 took place for the first time in Central Asia, in Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan on 25 to 27 June 2007. Hosted by the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, ACDR 2007 was conducted in collaboration with the Government of Japan, the United Nations Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC).

As a regional forum that fosters dialogue, information sharing and cooperation among member countries of the Asian Disaster Reduction Center, the Conference reported on significant accomplishments and major gaps in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) in the region. It also identified and discussed critical issues and concerns as well as effective strategies for meeting the challenges ahead. A total of 136 participants including dignitaries and government officials from 22 countries, and representatives of 32 organizations, among others, UN and international organizations, NGOs, financial sector, and civil society, as well as experts from academic institutions, meteorology, hydrology, geology, environment, and development fields, attended the Conference.

Mindful of the important accomplishments and challenging tasks of governments and all other stakeholders with respect to the HFA, the participants conveyed their resolve to preserve and to sustain the gains in disaster risk reduction and to promote further cooperation among countries and partner stakeholders in the region. Moreover, they recognized the need for accelerating the implementation of the HFA priorities for action at various levels. Overall, the participants agreed on the need to address the following major concerns and challenges:

(a) Effective governance for disaster risk reduction

The Conference acknowledged the critical role of governance at national, local and community levels, and the significance of political will and sustained commitment in

ensuring effective disaster risk reduction. It highlighted a number of good practices in mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into development processes, including policies, plans, and programmes, and into priority national sectors. It presented exemplary cases of strengthening legal frameworks, national platforms, and multi-stakeholder coordination and cooperation. Furthermore, the Conference recognized the need to review further and to strengthen existing legal frameworks and national platforms for disaster risk reduction as well as systems for disaster preparedness and response. It noted the need to make known standing national platforms and functioning national mechanisms for coordination for possible networking with existing regional and international platforms. It also noted the proposal of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan to develop a sub-regional mechanism for enhanced coordination in disaster risk management in Central Asia.

(b) Education and training for effective disaster risk reduction and building a collective culture of safety

The Conference acknowledged the important role of education and training in ensuring effective disaster risk reduction. It reported on a number of education and training initiatives at various levels and good practices in ensuring safety in schools. The participants recognized the need to promote and strengthen further such initiatives toward achieving a collective culture of safety. Health-related education was also considered as a priority concern for the coming years. The participants took note of the forthcoming first Regional Workshop on Education for Disaster Risk Reduction for Asia and the Pacific that will be held in Bangkok, Thailand, on 8-10 October 2007.

(c) Raising awareness and understanding on natural hazards and risks, climate change adaptation, and disaster risk reduction through public outreach and people-centered early warning systems

The Conference emphasized that disaster risk reduction is both a scientific subject and a human issue. As such, disaster risk managers and national meteorological and hydrological services should, in addition to scientific capacity building, build the capacity of the community they serve by reaching out to them. In particular, public outreach activities and mass media campaigns would contribute effectively to raising public awareness and understanding of natural hazards and risks, climate change, and disaster risk reduction. In this regard, the Conference encouraged the development and implementation of outreach programmes and the promotion of people-centered early warning systems, with the involvement of public and private sector partners, as a capacity building initiative for disaster risk reduction. Furthermore, the Conference welcomed the initiative of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) to develop and pilot a multi-stakeholder public outreach on

meteorological and hydrological services for disaster risk reduction, including the promotion of climate change adaptation, in the region.

(d) Capacity development for earthquake risk mitigation and ensuring building safety

The Conference cited the prevalence of earthquake risks in the region and acknowledged the importance of capacity building in earthquake risk mitigation. In particular, the Conference underscored the need for increased capacity at national and regional levels for inspection, evaluation, retrofitting of schools and hospitals, enforcement of building codes, and integration of disaster risk reduction into urban planning. In this regard, the participants recognized the need to enhance community awareness on the importance of earthquake-resistant houses and to promote further cooperation in capacity development for earthquake risk mitigation at regional and sub-regional levels.

(e) Science and advanced technology in support of disaster risk reduction

The Conference shared scientific knowledge and information on technological advancements and presented their applications for ensuring efficient and effective disaster risk reduction. It also addressed the wider definition of technology and knowledge for disaster risk reduction and recognized web-based disaster reduction hyperbase systems as an innovative option for their effective application. Moreover, the participants appreciated the usefulness of applied modern technology and encouraged its broadened application for enhancing early warning systems and increasing public awareness of hazards and risks, including taking advantage of existing initiative that are enabling the use of space-based technologies for risk reduction and emergency response activities, such as Sentinel Asia, UN-SPIDER and UNOSAT. The Conference noted the challenge to strengthen collaboration, to promote networking of expertise, and to ensure the effective transfer of scientific knowledge to the community.

(f) Public-private sector partnership and resource mobilization

The Conference emphasized the importance of promoting multi-stakeholder cooperation and collaboration as well as enduring commitment and long-term political will for public and private sectors partnerships in disaster risk reduction. This emphasis stems from the common recognition of disaster risk reduction as a shared concern of governments, businesses, and communities, and from the compelling need to pool resources and expertise of all sectors to work together to reduce disaster risks more effectively. Moreover, the Conference noted the common

concern over the need to sustain the gains in disaster risk reduction by ensuring continued and stable resource support, particularly through effective resource mobilization, increased corporate sector involvement, as well as prudent fund utilization and management.

(g) Holistic and integrated approach and innovative strategies for disaster risk reduction

The participants appreciated the holistic and integrated approach to disaster risk reduction and the efforts of stakeholders to find better ways and means for achieving the goals of the HFA. In this regard, the Conference presented good practices in community-based disaster risk reduction and cited the advantages of people-centered approach and combined top-down and bottom-up approach in ensuring participative decision-making and actions at all levels. The Conference recognized the need to promote further the holistic approach to disaster risk reduction, to strengthen multi-stakeholder cooperation and collaboration in all levels, and to encourage continued development of effective and innovative strategies and approaches.

In conclusion, the Conference presented and reviewed significant accomplishments, noteworthy achievements, and good practices in disaster risk reduction at local, national, regional, and international levels, including the progress of member countries in line with the implementation of the HFA priorities for action. Moreover, the participants expressed renewed commitment to move forward and to accelerate the implementation of the HFA with a view to achieving its goals and ensuring sustainable social and economic development in the region.

Finally, the participants expressed their profound appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan for generously hosting the Conference.