



EWC III

Third International Conference on Early Warning

From concept to action

27-29 March 2006
Bonn, Germany

Second announcement

Germany will host the Third International Conference on Early Warning in Bonn, from 27 to 29 March 2006, under the auspices of the United Nations.

The Indian Ocean tsunami disaster in December 2004, the devastating hurricane season in the Caribbean in the summer of 2005, the tragic earthquake in the Kashmir region of Pakistan and India in October, and many other dramatic events have reminded the world of the crucial importance of efficient early warning systems. As one of the most effective instruments of disaster reduction, early warning is a critical element to prevent hazardous events from turning into disasters. Clear warnings, received in time, coupled with the knowledge of what to expect and how to react, can make the difference between life and death, between economic survival and ruin, for individuals as well as communities.

The Early Warning Conference will be designed to highlight good practice through a focus on practical early warning projects; it will bring together governments, parliaments, international organizations, practitioners, experts in early warning and disaster risk reduction, and the scientific community. The EWC III follows the *World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR)* held in Kobe (Japan) in January 2005 and is part of the implementation of the *Hyogo Framework for Action* agreed in Kobe, with the aim of moving *from concept to action*. The UN Secretary-General has called for warning systems to cover all countries and all hazards; the conference will be a worthy opportunity to take stock of the survey being conducted to that effect.



www.ewc3.org



Aims

The basic objectives of the conference are:

- To identify unused potential in all areas of early warning,
- To select and help to implement specific projects to highlight and illustrate good practice in early warning,
- To stimulate action towards concrete follow-up,
- To discuss proposals for global integration of early warning, and
- To facilitate multi-disciplinary scientific debate on latest practices, research and future-oriented topics in early warning.

The conference will comprise two parallel streams, with appropriate interface:

- An action-oriented *Priorities and Projects Forum*, that will present a series of specific projects in early warning areas, and
- A *Scientific and Technical Symposium* that will discuss issues associated with early warning systems worldwide.

Early Warning can only be successful if the whole early warning chain is addressed from monitoring over alert to response. As a consequence early warning needs to be truly multi-disciplinary. The conference organizers have solicited the submission of projects on early warning from governments, organizations, communities and experts. A limited number of them will be presented in the Priorities and Projects Forum, where they will serve to illustrate good practice in dealing with hazards of the Earth, Water and Air, and to launch discussions with participants on issues related to early warning in the context of disaster reduction. The Scientific and Technical Symposium will provide a forum to present and discuss new research results and novel and/or particularly successful approaches in early warning. Lively open discussions will bridge the different disciplines and sectors involved with early warning. The Symposium will be structured into three thematic sessions: Mega Events, Multi-hazard Approaches, and People, Politics and Economics, addressing the most pressing issues to contribute to an effective global early warning system for all hazards.



The importance of early warning

Early warning is a major element of disaster risk reduction. It prevents loss of life and reduces the economic losses to a minimum. It is more than just a prediction: a complete and effective early warning system comprises a chain of four elements.

- Risk awareness: prior knowledge of the likely risk-scenarios that communities are faced with,
- Monitoring and warning service: monitoring of capacities for these risks and rapid and reliable decision-making processes for early warning,
- Communication: dissemination of understandable warnings and preparedness information to those at risk,
- Response capability: knowledge and preparedness capacity to act by all partners of the information chain.

Failure in any one part of the chain can mean breakdown of the whole system. Good early warning systems have strong linkages between the four elements.

Prior knowledge of risks does not automatically lead to action. During the preparatory work for the Second International Conference on Early Warning in 2003, regional consultations in Asia and the Pacific drew attention to the high risk of devastating tsunamis in that region, and to the importance of filling gaps in early warning systems. Knowledge was available, the risk was known, as was vulnerability. The challenge is to build mechanisms that can avert hazards turning into disasters. One year after the deadly tsunami in the Indian Ocean, the Third International Conference on Early Warning seizes the opportunity to support the establishment of more effective early warning and risk reduction mechanisms.

Monitoring systems should allow a multi-hazard approach. Especially with regard to cost effectiveness, the data collected should serve early warning purposes for different hazards. The Scientific and Technical Symposium will discuss this aspect, which will also be a criterion in the selection process of the projects to be presented in the Priorities and Projects Forum.

Even if a technical monitoring system is in place, there may be a lack of political support, laws and regulations, institutional responsibility and trained people. In one of its sessions, the Symposium will focus on the links between people, politics and economics and attempt to identify examples of simple and effective regulations for early warning mechanisms.

The Scientific and Technical Symposium will inform on the latest research and the Priorities and Projects Forum will be the platform for the presentation of early warning projects that focus on such events.



Background

The conference fits into a series of related meetings and initiatives:

- The *International Conference on Early Warning Systems for the Reduction of Natural Disasters* (EWC'98) that took place in 1998 in Potsdam (Germany) emphasized early warning as a core component of national and international prevention strategies for the 21st century.
- The *World Summit on Sustainable Development* (WSSD) held in Johannesburg (South Africa) from 26 August to 6 September 2002 called for greater commitment to support the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and to include disaster and risk reduction, and in particular the development and strengthening of early warning systems and networks, in sustainable development policies and action plans.
- The *Second International Conference on Early Warning* (EWC II), that took place in Bonn (Germany) from 16 to 18 October 2003, built upon principles developed at EWC'98. With its sub-title 'Integrating Early Warning into Public Policy', it brought together eminent actors from the political and scientific world and provided as an important outcome a framework for the *International Early Programme* (IEWP) that was launched at the WCDR.
- The *Platform for the Promotion of Early Warning* (PPEW) established in Bonn (Germany) in 2004 by the ISDR secretariat with the support of the German Government, was created in the follow-up to the EWC II to support the international community in implementing the IEWP.
- The adoption of the "Hyogo Framework for Action, 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters" by the *World Conference on Disaster Reduction* (WCDR) in Kobe, Hyogo (Japan) from 18 to 22 January 2005, underlined the importance of knowing risk and enhancing early warning to reduce disasters. The *International Early Warning Programme* (IEWP) was launched at the conference, against the backdrop of the devastating Indian Ocean tsunami.
- Numerous high profile initiatives in 2005 maintained early warning high on the international agenda: the call by the United Nations Secretary General in January 2005 for a global warning system for all hazards and all countries; his subsequent request to the ISDR secretariat to coordinate a global survey of early warning systems, with a view to identifying gaps and opportunities to create such global capacities; the rapid progress by countries and international partners to build a tsunami warning system for the Indian Ocean; the G8 statement supporting early warning systems and disaster risk reduction; and the many steps being taken by organizations worldwide to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action.



Outcomes of the conference

The main outcomes of the Third International Conference on Early Warning are intended to serve as reference for practitioners and for future work in the field of early warning. The conference will significantly contribute to the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action and specifically address issues identified in the International Early Warning Programme, developed at the EWC II and launched at the WCDR in Kobe. It will provide an action-oriented contribution to the Global Survey of Early Warning Systems called for by the Secretary General of the United Nations. The EWC III will generate valuable inputs to the biennial work programme of the CSD that is currently covering climate change and to the Habitat Summit to be held in July 2006 in Montreal.

Placed in the institutional context of the International Early Warning Programme and its supporting Platform for the Promotion of Early Warning, the key outcomes of the EWC III will be:

- A checklist of actions illustrated by good practices to assist countries in developing effective, people-centred early warning systems. This will list key elements and actions that national governments or community organizations can refer to when developing new early warning systems, evaluating existing arrangements or simply checking that crucial procedures are in place. A selection of practical examples and case studies, drawn from the conference and from the broader community, will be used throughout the document to illustrate key points. The checklist is not intended to be a comprehensive design manual, but instead will be a practical, non-technical reference tool to ensure that the major elements of a good early warning system are in place.
- A catalogue of early warning projects that results from the call for proposals and the project-oriented approach chosen for the conference itself. The catalogue will include all projects that have been retained by the review group and considered as useful for the development of early warning. It will be circulated at the conference to trigger donor interest for funding purposes, and after the conference will be administered by PPEW, as part of its regular functions.
- A document on the proceedings of the conference will include the presentations of abstracts submitted to the Technical and Scientific Symposium that have been selected for oral and poster presentation by the scientific review committee. This will contain crucial findings and recommendations by scientists and practitioners on future emerging issues in early warning, including on new dimensions in mega events, multi-hazard approaches and people-centred early warning approaches.
- The EWC III will also host the launch of the Global Survey of Early Warning Systems and will provide a prime opportunity to consider its recommendations and plan concrete implementation actions.

Tentative programme

The conference will consist of two main parallel parts, with additional activities and events being organized on its margins. It will take place in the Plenary Chamber of the former German Federal Parliament, a modern glass and steel building (completed in 1992) in the heart of the former government quarter of Bonn, and in the neighbouring historic Waterworks building (1875) that was the provisional seat of the German Parliament from 1986 to 1992. Participants will find accommodation in the many hotels of the city of Bonn.

The Priorities and Projects Forum of the conference, which will take place in the Plenary Chamber, will be led by professional moderators and will discuss key issues in early warning, illustrated through selected presentations of specific projects covering different hazards and regions of the world. The projects will serve as a starting point for a wide exchange of views that should cover not only technical matters but also issues such as access to information, data and information sharing, multi-hazard and multi-sectoral approaches, local knowledge, long-term planning, cost-benefit questions, living with and knowing the risk, etc.

The call for proposals was for projects in the stage of development or projects already under implementation. It resulted in the submission of about 130 projects from all regions of the world. The ISDR Platform for the Promotion of Early Warning (PPEW) coordinated a review process, with project proposals having been reviewed by international experts in various fields.

It is planned that some twelve projects will be presented in the Priorities and Projects Forum. In addition, all promising proposals will be collated in a portfolio of projects that will be published and presented to conference participants, interested parties and donors. Projects for presentation at the conference are being chosen based on their impact and their representative value in terms of early warning, their feasibility, urgency, sustainability, efficiency and cost effectiveness, as well as in consideration of an appropriate regional balance. The selection will be completed by the end of January 2006, and initial fund-raising efforts, where appropriate and feasible, will be undertaken by the secretariat.

The Forum's format will be inter-active: each of the three sessions covering the main hazard groups of the earth, water and air will be introduced by a series of presentations given by project managers or experts, who will, in short presentations (15-20 minutes) outline the background and objectives of the projects, their main characteristics, their strengths and the challenges they encounter. Steered by an active moderator, open discussions will then take place in which conference participants will be encouraged to engage. The format of the debate will be lively, inter-active and issue-focused. It will not take the form of prepared statements. Contradictory positions will be encouraged to stimulate the discussion and enrich the debate. The moderator, with expert support, will draw conclusions for each theme that will contribute to the conference's outcome documents. The three sessions will focus on issues associated with the main hazard groups (earth, water, and air), and will be merged with presentations of cross-cutting issues associated with building global capabilities in early warning.

The conference format does not allow time for the delivery of formal statements by governments or agencies. Instead, the conference organizers invite all participating organizations to submit, if they wish, prepared written statements that will be distributed through the secretariat (a minimum of 250 copies each should be submitted; no translation or reproduction can be effected by the secretariat).

For the Scientific and Technical Symposium, which will be held in the Waterworks building, about 160 abstracts from various regions and technical fields were submitted to the conference secretariat. Through an expert review process, about 35 abstract are being selected for oral presentation and discussion. In each of the three thematic sessions the speakers will present their research in 10 minutes followed by a short 5 minutes discussion. For in-depth consideration, each of the thematic sessions will be concluded by a 45 minutes round of open discussion. Those abstracts that were selected through the review process but could not be accommodated as an oral presentation will be invited for presentation in the poster session. The three sessions will be moderated by chairpersons who will also report pressing issues and key outcomes of the discussions to the Priorities and Projects Forum in plenary. In addition, on each day the Symposium participants will be briefed on the key issues and outcomes of the Priorities and Projects Forum. Through that exchange, the two streams of the conference will be closely linked.

Monday 27 March 2006

Plenary Opening Session

09.45 Welcome address by the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, **Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier**
10.00 Opening address by United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, **Mr. Jan Egeland**
10.15 Message from the Mayors' Conference on Early Warning
10.20 Keynote address (to be confirmed)
10.55 Organizational matters

11.00 Press conference (press briefing room)

Priorities and Projects Forum

Moderator: **Mr. Thomas Kausch** (*)

11.30 **Overarching issue:** A global early warning system; who is responsible and how can it be achieved? (Speaker to be confirmed)

International action and governance to build reliable systems worldwide, to energise partnerships, and to capitalize on opportunities and plug the gaps.

12.00 Session 1: **EARTH**

Shaking, blasting and sliding -- ready and resilient for the hazards of the Earth

During this session, participants will be presented with projects (*) from Asia, Central Asia, and Latin America that illustrate problems encountered and solutions offered in relation to earthquakes, landslides and volcanic activity. Experts in those various areas will contribute to the presentations, and participants will be invited and encouraged to take part in the discussions. From the exchange, the moderator will draw out features that deserve to be brought into the conference outcome documents.

13.00 Opening of poster session

15.00 Session 1, cont.

19.00 Reception hosted by the **German Federal Foreign Office**

Scientific and Technical Symposium

11.30 Opening of the Symposium by the Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization, **Mr. Michel Jarraud**

12.00 Session 1: **MULTI-HAZARD APPROACHES**

Keynote: Promoting risk-wise behaviour: an integrated strategy for reducing vulnerability and improving resiliency, by **Ms. Helen M. Wood**

In this session, participants will listen to ten short presentations (*) on subjects related to multi-hazard approaches, in different parts of the world, using various technologies. A discussion panel will conclude the session.

15.00 Session 1, cont.

Tuesday 28 March 2006

Priorities and Projects Forum

Moderator: **Ms. Mishal Husain** (*)

09.00 **Overarching issue:** National warning systems for all hazards and all people (Speaker to be confirmed)

Welding the best players into the best team for the best results; politicians, hazard experts, disaster authorities, media, community leaders.

09.30 Session 2: **WATER**

Too much or too little -- coping with the hazards of Water

As with the previous session, participants will be presented with projects (*) from West Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean to illustrate problems and solutions, this time in relation to climate risks, floods and tsunamis. Inputs from experts and participants will be invited as before, and the moderator will draw conclusions and features for the outcome documents.

13.00 Workshops (to be determined)

15.00 Session 2, cont.

16.00 Session 3: **AIR**

Weather eyes open -- predicting and responding to the hazards of the Air

Moderator: **Sir Trevor McDonald** (*)

During this session, participants will be exposed to projects (*) from East Africa, Asia and the Pacific to illustrate problems and solutions related to drought and desertification, storms and climate risks. Experts in those various areas will contribute to the presentations, and participants will be invited and encouraged to take part in the discussions. The moderator will draw features that will deserve to be brought into the conference outcome documents.

18.30 Reception hosted by the **City of Bonn**

Scientific and Technical Symposium

09.00 Session 2: **MEGA-EVENTS**

Keynote: Istanbul earthquake early warning and rapid response system, by **Mr. M. Erdik et al.**

In this session, participants will hear ten short presentations (*) on mega-events in different parts of the world, related to a variety of subjects that are directly related to early warning of mega-events in different natural hazards. A discussion panel will conclude the session.

15.00 Session 3: **PEOPLE, POLITICS AND ECONOMICS**

Keynote: Cost-effective strengthening of warnings through informal networks and channels, by Mr. John Handmer

In this session, participants will be presented with ten short interventions (*) to discuss early warning from a socio-economic and political perspective. Experiences from different parts of the world will be brought by the participants to enrich the discussion panel that will conclude the session.

Wednesday 29 March 2006

Priorities and Projects Forum

09.00 **Overarching issue:** The ultimate question who gets the message and what should they do? (Speaker to be confirmed)

Engaging communities, building awareness and preparedness, and making early warning systems people-centred.

09.30 Session 3, cont.

Scientific and Technical Symposium

09.00 Session 3, cont.

Plenary Closing Session

12.00 Closing session

During this session, the two streams of the conference will come together, from the Priorities and Projects Forum and from the Scientific and Technical Symposium, to conclude and map out future steps and consider the outcome documents that will have evolved during the 3-day conference, including a final statement on the role of Early Warning in Disaster Reduction.

13.00 Closure of the conference

(*) Titles of the projects and presentations will be posted on the website, as well as information on the moderators and presenters

The programme will be updated regularly on

www.ewc3.org

Organisational arrangements

The conference is prepared through a mechanism of inter-acting stakeholders:

The Federal Foreign Office in Germany has set up an EWC III Task Force to organise the conference with the support of and in co-operation with:

- A *conference secretariat* based in Geneva with the secretariat of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), working in tandem with ISDR's Bonn-based PPEW, which manages the conference programme, directs substantive issues and handles organizational matters;
- A *German supporting committee* coordinated by the Bonn-based German Committee for Disaster Reduction, DKKV, supports the organisational work and logistics as well as the organization of the Scientific and Technical Symposium with guidance from a *technical advisory committee*;
- A *consultative committee* composed of major stakeholders largely drawn from the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction and from the ISDR Support Group, consisting of governments' and agencies' representatives, which provides overall advice and guidance to the conference secretariat.

Interpretation services will be provided in the plenary only for English, French and Spanish. There will also be interpretation from German to those languages.



Contact information

For all enquiries on the EWC III, including programme, registration and logistics, please check the conference website: www.ewc3.org, or send you query to: ewc3@un.org
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Partners

The EWC III is organized by

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This is the last printed announcement for the EWC III.

For background information and proceedings of the first and second International Conferences on Early Warning (EWC '98, 7-11 September 1998, Potsdam, and EWC II, 16-18 October 2003, Bonn, respectively), please refer to www.gfz-potsdam.de/ewc98 and www.ewc2.org

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