



United Nations
International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

Statement by the Delegation of ISDR to the Sixteenth Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development

Thematic Discussion: Drought

Wednesday, 7 May 2008

Background

The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters, was adopted by the World Conference for Disaster Reduction in Kobe Japan in January 2005. The Framework offers guiding principles, priorities for action, and practical means for achieving disaster resilience for vulnerable communities. Priorities for action include:

1. Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation.
2. Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning.
3. Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels.
4. Reduce the underlying risk factors.
5. Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.

Drought and Desertification within the Hyogo Framework for Action

Drought is considered as a natural hazard, which, depending on the level of vulnerabilities, in a given situation can lead to disaster. Vulnerability to drought depends on a multitude of factors (including cultural, socio-economic, technology, government policies and natural resources management). However, a problem has been that many drought-related activities have been accomplished in a sectoral manner, with limited sharing of knowledge and experiences. As new technologies, tools, and methodologies become available and are subsequently adopted by drought-prone countries and regions, the importance of sharing this information and experience is paramount to future advances in drought management.

The need to develop mechanisms that would more effectively address drought risk reduction has become even more urgent in the light of the IPCC report, which predicts more frequent and more severe droughts in some of the most vulnerable countries of the world, particularly in Africa.

The Hyogo Framework makes reference to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, which was adopted in 1994 and entered into force in 1996. It also acknowledges “the need to promote food security as an important factor in ensuring the resilience of communities to hazards, particularly in

areas prone to drought, flood, cyclones and other hazards that can weaken agriculture-based livelihoods”.

Partnerships within the ISDR System

In response to disaster trends and the increased expectations and demands by Governments and other stakeholders to implement the *Hyogo Framework for Action*, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) has evolved into a global system of partnerships: the *ISDR system*. The ISDR system is composed of national authorities and platforms, regional, international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, the United Nations system, international financial institutions, and scientific and technical bodies and various specialized networks. ISDR system partners face a common set of major challenges to scale up action to implement the Hyogo Framework. Meeting those challenges requires coordinated and complementary action at community, provincial, national and international levels.

Thematic partnerships currently associated with the ISDR system generally have a common aim in seeking to develop and link technical expertise in the thematic area of focus with the concerns of policy makers and practitioners. Their activities include issue formulation, advocacy, networking, coordination, information exchange, good practice guidance, capacity development, and joint programme work. They have been an important source of expert guidance and conduit for providing information on initiatives and roles in disaster risk reduction. "Thematic platforms" exist within the ISDR system for disaster risk reduction topics such as early warning, disaster recovery, climate change and education.

Drought Networks

The ISDR Drought Discussion Group's report in April 2003, *Drought: Living with Risk: An Integrated Approach to Reducing Societal Vulnerability to Drought*, identified the key issues associated with drought risk reduction and recommended the development of a global network. Such a network would not duplicate the work of regional or sub-regional networks, but would strengthen their work and provide a forum for inter-regional exchange of ideas, technology and experiences. The report and proposal were subsequently presented to and endorsed by the ISDR Inter-Agency Task Force.

The aim in the development of networks and mechanisms to encourage the implementation of drought risk reduction project and practices, is to foster an ISDR-related collaborative "drought community", implementing drought risk reduction practices, and acquiring the resources to carry out these activities.

Towards a Global Network for Drought Risk Reduction

Regional and sub-regional networks that address drought risk reduction exist or are in the process of being formed. It should however be noted that these efforts at setting up regional networks have still not been as successful as desired. Indeed, the Secretary General's Report to CSD 16 notes that "though there is increasing recognition of the crucial role that systems and networks for drought monitoring, early warning, and drought impact and assessment can play in drought mitigation, in many drought affected countries and regions, such systems and networks are not available, or where they are available, often do not effectively operate."

The development of regional networks has been a challenging process because of overlapping political jurisdictions, differences in the types of participants and policy issues in each region, varying degrees of interest among potential regional participants, and different implementation timelines. These factors have resulted in the creation of dispersed regional networks. Additional work is needed to facilitate the

development of regional and sub-regional networks, as well as to create additional networks and coordinate the exchange of information and expertise between them.

The Global Drought Risk Reduction Network (GDRRN) will assist in identifying drought risk reduction priorities, coordinating global support initiatives, developing guidance information, and nurturing the development and strengthening of regional networks. It will bring together the range of natural and social scientists and practitioners needed to implement the vision of drought management proposed in the UN ISDR document “Drought risk reduction framework and practices”. The partnership behind the network will provide leadership and guidance for the thematic area, as its resources allow, including for advocacy, coordination, networking and partnership development, information provision, and inputs to Prevention Web and global and regional reporting processes. It will follow the work with existing CSD registered partnerships on drought and provide linkages between ongoing activities in different parts of the world.

