

# SIDMUN XVII

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## United Nations Development Programme

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# The Question of Long Term Natural Disaster Relief

*“For every glance behind us, we should look twice to the future”*

*-Ban-ki Moon, SG of United Nations*

## Introduction

Natural disasters are an unfortunate part of nature. They destroy homes, injure or kill people, and displace entire villages. This happens many times in lesser developed areas, where aid is limited. The goal of this committee is to come up with long-term solutions to this problem and to figure out ways that these affected people can receive useful aid in their time of need. The committee must also decide when a disaster-stricken area is self-sufficient once again.

## About UNDP

UNDP, the United Nations Development Programme, is a “global development network, an organization advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life”. UNDP operates in 166 countries around the world. The UNDP is a major contributor to the Millennium Development Goals, especially the eradication of poverty, HIV/AIDS, crisis prevention, including natural disaster relief, environmental stability, and democratic governance.

## History of the Problem

Natural disasters have taken place countless times throughout history. Unfortunately, the aftermath of these terrible occurrences seem to not only affect the area where the disaster took place, but the entire global community. “Disaster risk is increasingly of global concern and its impact and actions in one region can have an impact on risks in another, and vice versa.”<sup>1</sup> The United Nations and many of its programs have worked tirelessly to reduce the impact of natural disasters and help affected nations recover from their sting.

The issues of relief, prevention, and financial aid in the event of a natural disaster are not issues that were addressed only by the current generation. On December 11, 1987, the General Assembly declared in its 42nd session that the following decade (1990-1999) would be known as

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<sup>1</sup>Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters



the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR). “The objective of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction is to reduce through concerted international action, especially in developing countries, the loss of life, property damage and social and economic disruption caused by natural disasters...”<sup>2</sup> Calling upon the international community as well as individual governments, the IDNDR, which ended in 1999, managed to achieve many of their goals including better threat assessment of disasters, an increase in educational facilities focusing on disaster reduction, an increase of IDNDR committees and focal points in various countries, as well as better availability of information about natural disasters.<sup>3</sup>

As a successor of the IDNDR, the United Nations set up the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) in December of 1999. The goals of this establishment include strengthening nations so they are able to bounce back from the consequences of natural disasters as well as stressing the importance of risk prevention strategies. But the backbone of the ISDR and all nations who are planning to reduce the risks posed by these natural disasters is the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters.

Adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan, the Hyogo Framework is a comprehensive plan to tackle the problems posed by natural disasters. Building off of the Yokohoma Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation (implemented in 1994), the Hyogo Framework identifies five specific areas which need to be strengthened in order to have an effective plan for disaster reduction and relief. These are “(a) Governance: organizational, legal and policy frameworks; (b) Risk identification, assessment, monitoring and early warning; (c) Knowledge management and education; (d) Reducing underlying risk factors; (e) Preparedness for effective response and recovery.”<sup>4</sup> With these areas in mind, the Hyogo Framework hopes to strengthen what already exists and develop new ideas to ensure a safe future.

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<sup>2</sup> A/RES/44/236 International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction

<sup>3</sup> Statement by Syed Rafiqul Haque, Hon’ble Member of Bangladesh National Parliament to the General Assembly on November 8, 1999 regarding the IDNDR

<sup>4</sup> The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters



A couple of years ago, a devastating natural disaster struck the Indian Ocean on December 26, 2004. Caused by an earthquake of 9.0 magnitude, a group of tsunamis swept away hundreds of thousands of lives, as well as homes and businesses. Within three hours after he heard the news of tsunamis caused by an earthquake in the Indian Ocean, veteran official Arjun Katoch, the officer on duty at the United Nations Geneva headquarters, mobilized the first group of disaster coordination teams. Ever since then, the United Nations has put forth various solutions and proposals to get the affected areas back on their feet. “UNDP’s central role involves mapping out and implementing strategies that give a boost to governments and communities trying to begin recovery activities.”<sup>5</sup> Since merely days after these tsunamis struck, UNDP has been working extremely hard to rebuild the affected area. With the adoption of the Hyogo Framework by the international community and the endless number of hours put in by the UN dedicated to disaster relief, UNDP hopes to bring more assistance to those darkened by natural disasters like the one aforementioned.

**Table I** shows the relations between natural disasters and environmental vulnerability

Type of Disasters	Ecological Effects	Effects on Infrastructure	Effects on Agriculture and Forestry
Earthquakes Hurricanes,	Tremors and fissures. Land slides Liquefaction Underground settling and collapses. Avalanches and landslides. Changes in water courses.	Damage to constructions. Damage to roads, bridges, levees and canals. Damages to pipelines , posts and cables. Undermining and burying of structures. River embankment causing local floods. Sinking of structures and buildings. Underground constructions are affected. Damage and destruction of urban infrastructure (networks, streets, equipment and furniture). Destruction of hazardous waste storage tanks.	Losses in affected areas due to landslides, avalanches or liquefaction. Temporary loss of irrigation systems. Localized losses of plants, and vegetative and forest covers..
Typhoons and Cyclones, Tropical Storms	Gales and constant winds Flooding(due to heavy rains, swelling of rivers and	Damage to buildings Interruption, rupture and/or collapsing of distribution	Loss of vegetative cover, tree-falling, crop damage. Erosion affects root crops

Survivors of the Tsunami: One Year Later, UNDP Assisting Communities to Build Back Better



	<p>rivers braking their banks). Landslides Avalanches Soil erosion Sedimentation of rivers Damage to coral reefs</p>	<p>lines Damage to bridges and roads due to landslides.</p>	<p>and tubers. Change in natural and man-made drainage systems. Soil sedimentation, salinization, contamination and erosion.</p>
Droughts	<p>Soil drying and cracking; loss of the vegetative cover. Exposure to wind erosion. Desertification. Fires</p>	<p>Does not provoke major effects</p>	<p>Loss of crops and vegetative cover. Erosion and forest damage. Sand and infertile soil deposits. Crop cycles altered. Development of dry climate, drought resistant vegetation, thorn bushes and cactacea.</p>
Floods	<p>Erosion Soil over-saturation, destabilization and landslides Sedimentation</p>	<p>Loosening of building foundations and piles. Burying and sliding of infrastructure and constructions Sedimentation and blockage of canals and drainage systems..</p>	<p>Destruction of crops, alteration of crop types and harvest cycles. Damage located in lands, planting and forest areas. Increased moisture improves soil quality in some areas, turning them into productive ones (if only temporarily).</p>
Tsunamis and Earthquakes	<p>Floods Salinization and sedimentation in coastal strips Pollution of water streams and water tables.</p>	<p>Destruction of buildings , bridges, roads, irrigation and drainage systems.</p>	<p>Damage to crops (harvest) Destruction of coastal plantations. Alteration of coastal fauna cycles Fishing is affected.</p>
Volcanic eruptions	<p>Fires, loss in vegetative cover. Deposit of incandescent material and lava. Deposits of volcanic ash. Landslides Liquefactions Ice melting and avalanches Mud flows</p>	<p>Destruction of buildings and other infrastructure. Collapsing of roofs due to deposits of volcanic ash. Buildings are buried. Fires Canals, bridges and lines of transmission (above and underground) are affected.</p>	<p>Wide-spread defoliation. Damage to vegetative and forest covers. Fire in areas close to the volcanic eruption. Crops are buried; productive lands are damaged due to sedimentation, pollution and landslides. Fire in plantations. Deposits of volcanic ash on undamaged soils may increase soil Fertility in the long run.</p>



**Source:** Frederick C. Cuny, Disasters and prevention, Oxford University Press, New York, 1983

## **Current Status**

### **United States of America**

August 26, 2005 Hurricane Katrina hit the southern coast of the United States of America. It was allegedly reported that more than 1800 people were lost and nearly \$81 billion dollars in damages occurred. The storm had a massive impact on land affecting 90,000 square miles. Over 80% of the city of New Orleans was flooded. Both Hurricane Katrina and Rita have been labeled as the deadliest hurricane in the nation's history. Yet many researchers believe that the effects of Katrina were enhanced primarily because of the extreme poverty, failing education system, low wages and weak tax base that were rampant even 40 years before the devastating hurricane. The hurricane's impact however has been seemingly everlasting. As the rate of spending increases annually many economists fear that the hurricane interrupted potential oil sources due to the destruction of the Gulf Coast's highways. Katrina destroyed 30 oil platforms and closed nine refineries. 1.3 million acres of forest lands have been destroyed. In addition thousands of local residents that are displaced remain unemployed. Before Katrina the region supported more than 1 million non-farm jobs with nearly 800,000 of them in New Orleans. In contrast, the USA has been experiencing severe droughts as the mid west and north east have had contrary to the normal weather. California once again has been suffering from severe wild fires. More than 2000 residents have been ordered to flee from the region near Santa Cruz. The fire began in mid-August near the Pacific Coast about 60 miles south of San Francisco and burned over 2800 acres. Most residents evacuated before any serious damage occurred. Both strong winds and the regions dry condition have made it hard for the fire to be contained.

### **Mexico and Canada**

The devastating effects of global warming have been evident in Mexico for many decades. Most of the early natural disasters were earthquakes. In 1985 Mexico City lost thousands of people when ten buildings collapsed under the strength of an 8.1 magnitude earthquake. In 1988 Hurricane Gilberto hit the coast of the Gulf of Mexico causing much damage to Yucatan, also devastating 50% of the beaches and thus tourism. In 1995 Hurricane Henriette and Ismael hit San Lucas and Sinaloa requiring the Ministry of National Defense to provide



services to the victims. Within a few months earthquakes hit cities on the coast such as Guerrero, Oaxaca and Jalisco.

Hurricane Paulina hit the same area two years later. In addition to all of these things many Mexican rivers overflowed in 1999 affection the areas of Hidalgo, Veracruz and Puebla. Hurricane Wilma in 2005 however, has been the most expensive natural disaster in Mexico's history. In 2007 the State of Tabasco especially experience one of it's greatest disasters not only for the number of victims but the amount of material losses and resources needed to fix the region. Tabasco is a low-lying state in eastern Mexico. Torrential rains that year surpassed the capacity of the rivers; Grijalva, Usumacinta, Carrizal and Mazcalapa as well as the Penitas dam covering nearly 80% of the land with water. The city's capital, Villahermosa is compared to New Orleans in 2005. The floodgates were later opened causing a flood tragedy. More than half the population lost their homes and all their material possessions. Those who survived climbed onto rooftops waiting to be rescued. It was necessary to use armed forces in order to restore function to the town and protect the citizens. The effects of the natural disaster were made worse by the realization that the states staple crops', banana, chili and corn, were all lost. It is important to note that the first priority of the Mexican government was to rescue the victims, house, and feed and clothe the refugees and deal with the growing problem of cholera and all other water-borne diseases (banderasnewsx.com). Later in 2007, an avalanche in Chiapas caused an immense wave that buried the town of Juan de Grijalva (explorandomexico.com).

Recent reports have stated that the risk to people in Canada with respect to natural disasters is "medium low" with floods and landslides most likely to claim lives. However within the last two decades Canada has been suffering from it's largest natural disasters which experts believe will get bigger and worse each year. Earthquakes have remained a constant over the past 50 years but weather-related disasters have skyrocketed. Climate change is said to exacerbate the already extreme weather. Canada like Mexico suffer from floods, snowmelt accounting for 40%. Some research suggests that a greater percentage of Canada's rainfall is occurring in heavy downpours, much responsibility for the upward trend in flood disasters is because of man. Flooding in urban areas has been greatly exacerbated by extensive paving (which reduces the penetration of water into the ground), aging sewer systems that are less able to cope with larger loads, and the construction of roads, homes, and other structures on flood plains (ec.gc.org) . Ironically droughts have been the most expensive of Canada's natural disasters. Canada has



experienced 40 dry spells within the last 200 years. All four of Canada's deadliest droughts have taken place within the last 25 years the most recent in 2001 costing the government over \$5 billion. Droughts are related to reduced stream flow, water levels and runoff. Drought's cannot be predicted but the impacts can be ameliorated by water and soil conservation, grassland management and forest-fire watches.

### Asia

Bangladesh, China, India and Indonesia led the ranking for countries where most people are at risk from one or more of the natural disasters studied. Many Asian countries such as China, Taiwan and Japan are on high alert for natural disasters this year. Typhoon Morakot left nearly nine million people in both China and Taiwan homeless while both Tropical Storm Etau and earthquake struck Japan. At the same time major earthquakes broke out in the Indian Ocean off India's Andaman Islands which prompted tsunami alerts for India, Myanmar, Indonesia, Thailand and Bangladesh.

**A NOTE FROM BAN KI-MOON**  
UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon called for urgent action to minimize disaster damages in Asia. At the opening of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Ban said "We know that prevention is better than the cure. Yet too often, there is a tendency to defer action until after disasters occur." Ban underscored the importance of building risk reduction capacities as well as raising public awareness (ptinews.com).

### China

After Typhoon Morakot hit China's coast a massive landslide hit more than six apartment buildings in residential eastern China. The landslides were allegedly triggered by heavy rains carried by the storms which killed six people and left three missing in mainland China. Officials said that search operations were hampered by huge amounts of earth and rock. The typhoon forced 1.4 million Chinese to evacuate. In Taiwan however, the story was different. A mudslide touched off by Morakot buried a remote mountain village leaving 400 people missing. The region was hit with more than 2 meters of rain before crossing the Taiwan Strait. The brunt of the storm lay in the agricultural south and foliated mountain side. All farmlands and cities are now swamped with murky water. The death toll in Taiwan alone is 38 and rising. Although the countries Cabinet did set aside more than \$600 million in emergency funds to help relief work, its



effectiveness is still in speculation. The Typhoon as of current also killed 22 people in the Philippines.

### **Japan**

Japan was hit by two very potent earthquakes. The first registered a 7.6, hit 257 km north of Port Blair in India's Andaman Islands. Many people became very anxious as the region suffered from one of the worst tsunamis in 2004. The earthquake appeared to occur at a depth of 33 km. One death but several casualties were reported. The earthquakes halted many trains and forced two nuclear reactors to shut down. It should be dually noted that reactors are automatically shut down whenever a quake of certain strength is registered. It is noted that more than 80 people suffered injuries from falling.

### **India**

India suffered from one of the worst natural calamities that the world has ever seen. After the tsunami hit a major problem was the remaining sea water and mud. As of right now the primary goals of NGO's is land reclamation and renewing agriculture in the region. Sea water that had flooded fields destroyed most standing crops. Environmentalists did fear that salt would seep into remaining water sources such as small ponds. They found however that the ph of the soul did not change but electric conductivity increased tremendously in certain places which has a reverse effect on the desalination process. Another problem is the fact that carbon content has dropped which means that little micro-organisms exist in the soil. In some places sand and silt deposits have risen up to three feet. Because of the salt any fertilizer will render ineffective for at least two years. The immediate task of all workers after the tsunami was removing sand deposits off the top soil, cleaning irrigation tanks and essentially using green manure seeds to produce biomass that would increase carbon content. The Indian government did promise compensation packages provided to families of up to 12,500 rupees per hectare for three years. This however does not take into account specific crop types and losses incurred by specific farming communities. Yet because the cost of reclamation varies from place to place not every community has received what it needs to survive.



## European Union

In comparison to other parts of the world, Europe is relatively safe from natural disasters. Environmentalists have concluded that Denmark and Finland are two of the world's safest places for avoiding natural disasters which combined risk to populations from earthquakes, floods, landslides and tropical cyclones. Yet even the safest of places can have a history of wild unpredictable weather. As a result of Europe's diverse climatic characteristics it is susceptible to different extremes of natural events. The large river systems of western, central and eastern Europe as well as the small streams of the Mediterranean are prone to flooding. Southern Europe is more vulnerable to droughts. Eastern and western parts deal with severe forest fires while the British Isles deal with severe storms. On average over 20 cyclones hit the British Isles yearly which are coupled with heavy rain and severe flooding. In 1953 protective dikes crumbled leaving large portions of the Netherlands flooded and nearly 1800 people dead. Within the last few years Italy, Germany, Belgium and France have all seen a rise in water levels. Central Europe became particularly worried when in 1997 the River Oder overflowed causing serious damage.

Heavy overnight storms in mid-august, have left nine people dead and dozens injured. Poland was the hardest hit, with seven deaths, after winds reached nearly 130kms and hour. Trees were uprooted and power lines were toppled leaving thousands of people without power. Reporters state that the fatalities were the result of fallen trees and electrocution by power lines. The Czech Republic and Austria saw large-scale flooding and mass devastation In addition, the Mediterranean has been suffering from forest fires. On average Europe experiences 65,000 fires a year which destroys more than 500,000 hectares of land. There is no European common policy of fire prevention. The power lies in individual state. The European Union has formed a fire intervention force based in Corsica and Sardinia. Although most of these fires are caused by man, many natural factors such as drought, wind speed and topography influence the spread. Earthquakes however seem to now take a more prominent role than it did before. Within the last 15 years 5000 people have died in countries within the European Union. In 1980 earthquakes in southern Italy killed nearly 4580 people leaving 250,000 homeless. Earthquakes in Grevena, Greece and Assisi have caused even greater damage. Probably the most devastating earthquake in current history occurred April 6, 2009 in L'Aquila, Italy which is only 70 miles away from Rome. The small medieval town was struck by a 6.2 magnitude earthquake. The tremor



occurred around 3:00 a.m., killing nearly 150 sleeping victims. More than 50,000 people were left without homes and shelter. Damage occurred to the Basilica di Santa Marida di Collemaggio which has stood the test of time since 1300. The National Museum of Abruzzo as well as the bell-tower of San Bernadino also were destroyed. Many nearby villages especially that of Onna were flattened (nydailynews.com). 1,360 structures, 765 churches and 535 buildings have been added to the list of those in and around the city that need repair and restoration. As of now firemen who work in Italy's Alpine region have been deployed to making sure that the remaining buildings are kept safe. In addition with help from various non-government organizations L'Aquila will be functioning once again in a couple of years. (bbcnews.com)

### Africa

On top of the man made crisis in Africa, these impoverished nations must deal with extreme living environments. One study showed that 65% of natural disasters in Africa were caused by epidemics while 40% of the population suffered from drought. At the end of 2006 alone an estimated 9.7 million people were displaced due to conflict and floods. 21.8 million people were affected by droughts. In 2006 it became known that 53% of all refugee camps were in Africa.

One of the most notorious natural tragedies was the ENSLO floods in 1998 that affected southern and eastern Africa. Both the ENSLO and the Mozambique floods in early 2000-2001 caused considerable damage to property and infrastructure. Roads and railways between Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania were all ruined, impeding the movement of goods and persons. Also projected rise in coastal waters have increased the vulnerability of floods in places such as Banjul in Gambia. Coastal erosion is already a major problem in many areas.

Later in 2007 floods once again hit West and East Africa particularly affecting Ethiopia, Sudan, Ghana and Uganda. Organization such as the Department for International Development contributed £8.3 million. In Ghana, DFID's funding of £250,000 through the International Federation Red Cross (IFRC) helped provide emergency shelter and clean water for 60,000 people. And in northern Ghana, DFID is supporting a livelihood recovery programme through CARE that aims to build the resilience of communities to cope with future flooding and other shocks.

Another natural disaster that the international community should look into is the Goma volcanic eruption. In January 2002 Mount Nyamuragira erupted for the first time in 25 years



sending hot lava through eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. 40% of the city was destroyed, 45 people died and 400,000 were displaced. The eruption left 120,000 permanently homeless. Because the DRC was overwhelmed by the scale of the disaster UNDP contributed 4.9 million dollars to relief aid. Kenya in 2002, 2005 and late 2005 dealt with serious flooding. Kenya was also a victim of the 2004 tsunami that devastated other parts of the Indian Ocean. More recently the country has been experienced a painful drought and subsequent food scarcity.

### Middle East

According to Ban-ki Moon more than 37 million people have been affected by natural disasters that have hit the region in the past 20 years causing more than \$19 billion. Though the Gulf countries have been less exposed to natural disasters, rising sea levels threaten Bahrain, Egypt and Djibouti. Many Arab countries to a lesser extent also suffer from drought and earthquakes. The Middle East and North Africa have seen a variety of disasters in the last 20 years ranging from droughts that affected Sudan and Somalia, flooding in Morocco, earthquakes in Egypt and Algeria as well as cyclones that hit Oman and United Arab Emirates in 2007. The Secretary General's current report says that within the next two years Oman, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Iraq will be hit by many droughts while earthquakes will affect large portions of both Oman and Bahrain all due to global warming. Scientists who have studied the region believe that countries such as Egypt and Bahrain have a high likelihood of submersion within the next 100. Many leaders such as Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid the vice president of the UAE believe that the future possibilities of disasters only add the present difficulties of poverty, famine,

#### Factors that make us **less** vulnerable:

- better warning and emergency-response systems;
- greater economic capacity;
- well-established government disaster-assistance programs and private insurance companies;
- better government policies;
- community initiatives;
- advances in science and engineering; and
- Major risk-reduction programs, such as the Red River Floodway.

#### Factors that make us **more** vulnerable:

- population growth (+24 per cent between 1980 and 1998);
- urbanization;
- environmental degradation;
- urban sprawl in hazard-prone areas;
- loss of community memory about hazardous events due to increased mobility;
- an aging population
- an aging infrastructure, unable to cope with environmental loads;
- greater reliance on power, water, transportation, and communication systems; and
- Historical over-reliance on technological solutions.



education and healthy. Although many Middle Eastern countries are not focused on disaster prevention the chances of a natural disaster occurring is increasing due to global warming, continued environment destruction and population growth makes for unsafe cities.

### **Current Hurricane Season**

The summer of 2009 has brought with it many delayed but unexpected surprises. Traditionally hurricane season starts June 1<sup>st</sup> and ends November 30<sup>th</sup>. Last year more than five tropical depressions formed over the Atlantic. The first hurricane of the season was Hurricane Bill. Forecasters predicted that the storm would strengthen to a Category 3 bypassing U.S hot zones such as Florida and Louisiana. The hurricane was predicted to reach Bermuda instead. Tropical Storm Ana was also predicted to make landfall in Florida but changing weather patterns could possibly change the storms path. Around the same time Bill and Ana formed, Tropical Storm Claudette was predicted to hit the Florida coast. Bill will be the first category three hurricane since 2005 (Wilma) to hit the U.S.

### **Proposed Solutions**

Many actions are being taken in order to help protect human lives during natural disasters. Many nations who do not have a strong infrastructure are dependent upon the help of others to provide low cost communication systems and other resources in order to communicate with those who cannot communicate during the time of a natural disaster. Many companies have started innovating new technology that can help those who are victims to natural disasters. One Company is TIDES which stands for Transportable Infrastructures for Development and Emergency Support. This company finds low cost solutions for those who become homeless due to natural disaster. This company bases the infrastructure that it provides around shelter, water and communication technology. Other companies and organizations are investing in solar power and wind power stations in order to generate electricity in areas where electricity is wiped out. Technology that can be powered naturally is the most beneficial type of technology because it can be used in nations where there is no electrical source. Solar powered machines and daily gadgets can be used as a temporary relief to those who have lost everything and in areas where no other power can be generated.



Communication is a major resource that can benefit when helping victims from natural disasters. When responding to natural disasters it is imperative for search and rescue teams to keep in contact with control centers. In order for immediate relief and the fastest way to help victims, search and rescue teams can enter the disaster zone and rescue those who are in danger. After the search and rescue mission the implementation of infrastructure is the next important step that must be taken. In some cases satellite equipment can be used to assure relief across the world. Satellites are fast and quick in order to quickly provide relief to nations in need. Satellites provide high quality connectivity and fast deployment. Many companies have created satellites that can be used in time of disaster to quickly discover where the disaster has hit and how to provide help. The innovation of new technology is the best and most productive way to helping victims of natural disasters. Technology can provide location of the distressed people, information regarding the disaster and communication between control centers and rescuers and between the victims and rescuers. Naturally powered technology can help save lives and help to provide a simple way to temporary living during the time of recovery in a location that is distressed due to natural disasters. Nations who invest into new technology will be able to proactively respond to natural disasters that occur in their nation or in surrounding nations across the globe.

## **Bloc Positions**

### **North America**

North America is no stranger to cases of natural disasters, for the nations in such a block are either have been affected by such cases, or have provided aid to them. The Caribbean is often hit by tropical storms and hurricanes during the Atlantic hurricane season, which lasts from June to November each year. These storms severely set back development efforts in a country already overwhelmed with huge social, economic and environmental challenges ,which in turn decrease its capacity to respond and cope with natural disasters. However, there has been progress regarding the reaction of these cases, decreasing their impact as time goes by. A key role in this improvement is led by UNDP through its projects to work with the many challenges nations like these face, one being severe poverty. UNDP has been working with the national disaster risk management systems of these nations in an effort to establish a national civil protection



programme where it has not existed. Donor nations work with UNDP to rebuild livelihoods in tsunami areas and in areas where the relief effort has made reconstruction possible.

### **South America**

Regions in South America have also been badly affected by the same natural disasters that have hit North America, notably with the damage in infrastructure. In response, authorities provide what humanitarian relief they can, while the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA,) in particular, had deployed one of its regional response advisers from nearby nations. The National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO) of certain states also provide relief supplies, particularly food to all the affected areas using assets from the respective country's defense force, military, and foreign aid to access those communities that are difficult to reach by road. UNDP has coordinated recovery efforts, which has brought in national, international and UN relief workers in response to cases of emergency that plead for international humanitarian assistance. UNDP still actively remains in the affected areas, working toward the overall strengthening of the affected state's ability to respond to and mitigate the effects of future disasters.

### **Southeast Asia**

Natural disasters are capable of erasing decades of economic and social development, further cementing poverty and inequality throughout the Asia-Pacific. How nations deal with natural disasters have varied, bearing on sustainable development and the quality of life throughout the Asia-Pacific.

According to U. N. estimates, natural disasters killed nearly 236,000 people and caused \$181 billion in economic damage. These countries are considered most at risk from deaths from floods, landslides, and other hazards as a result of cyclones and other forces of nature. Unfortunately, many of these nations are particularly vulnerable to climate change given their location. In some cases, the effects of these alterations lead to inundation. Relief operations have proved to be difficult to carry out until the flood waters recede. To help increase response to disasters such as the aforementioned, donations have been made to the High Level Conference on the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) organized by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), working toward the fund's \$500 million target in 2008.



## **Europe**

Europe's diverse geophysical and climatic characteristics make it susceptible to a wide range of extreme natural events. The large river systems of western, central and eastern Europe, and the smaller streams of the Mediterranean make the seas at risk of flooding. Southern Europe is prone to drought, the Mediterranean and eastern Europe to forest fires, western Europe and the British Isles to storms, mountain areas such as the Alps, the Pyrenees and the Carpathians to avalanches and specific areas such as the central and eastern Mediterranean to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. The western Balkans area and Turkey face threats from many natural hazards, including floods, droughts, forest fires, earthquakes and landslides, and those threats may increase. While these countries are increasingly suffering from the detrimental effects of climate change, many of their economies provide potential for enhancing efficient relief. Along with the United States, the EU nations of Sweden, Britain, and Germany allocate 10 percent of humanitarian aid to such efforts.

## **Africa**

Within the past decade, natural disasters have damaged many regions of Africa, leading to a considerable loss of life and livelihoods, especially in 2008. In West Africa, floods or severe drought have affected a number of countries. Because of these crises, many homes, crops, and infrastructure had been destroyed. This has placed the affected African nations in a difficult position, for they also are faced with obstacles of the global food crisis. Although a flash appeals for these cases have been funded in what may seem efficient in UN efforts, these crises are continued for some months because harvest is not effective until the next summer. Presently, UNDP helps countries "mainstream natural disaster reduction, as well as prevent, and recover from, armed conflicts through capacity building and the promotion of better governance networks."

## **Middle East**

Droughts, floods, and other weather-related events are a growing threat in the Middle East. According to the Human Development Report 2007/08, the Arab States region is the most vulnerable in the world to climatic changes, with predicted impacts ranging from increased droughts to land degradation and desertification. Historically, disaster management in Arab states revolved around floods, focusing on rescue and relief. After each disaster, the



government directs substantial expenses towards rescue, relief and rehabilitation. The October 2005 earthquake caused widespread devastation in these nation, compelling some governments to these nations to form its own Federal Relief Commission (FRC) to manage the response to this natural disaster. The primary task of the FRC is to undertake the large scale relief operation in the areas of search and rescue, health, water, food and shelter, later moving into the reconstruction and rehabilitation phase. However, since the damage to government institutions had been immense, the capacities in departments of the like have been severely limited.

### **Position Paper Questions**

1. What is your country's history with natural disasters?
2. What has your country done in the past to aid recovery domestically? Internationally?
3. Does you country use non-governmental organizations to provide aid?
4. How does your country feel about the Hyogo Framework for Action?
5. What are your country's priorities in receiving or providing disaster aid?
6. What is your country doing to raise awareness and prevent natural disasters?

### **Resolution Questions**

1. How can relief efforts be made as cost-effective as possible?
2. How can relief be made as eco-friendly as possible?
3. How will relief projects be funded, not depending on the World Bank, in the short term? long term?
4. How will developing states contribute to disaster aid?
5. What can be done to prevent disease outbreaks in disaster-stricken areas?
6. Should bloc policies be made in regions that are more disaster prone in addition to independent policies? If so what would be some specific guidelines?

\*Please not that the chairs would like to see the use of some green technology incorporated into a resolution. One thing that will not be tolerated in the committee is the creation of another sub-organization or body. As UNDP we do not have any power to authorize such a creation and as such we will not allow it. You must use previously existing bodies! Also all delegates should research in depth the crisis in Haiti as a reference point!

See next page for helpful links.



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