

Launch of the HelpDesk for Integrated Flood Management

Wednesday, 17 June, 13:00-15:00
Room 15, CICC

Estimated time of her opening statement: 13:05
(Immediately after Michel Jarraud's opening statement)

*Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is my great pleasure to have this opportunity to congratulate with you the 'launch of the HelpDesk for Integrated Flood Management' at the Second Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

According to the Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction: *Risk and Poverty in a Changing Climate*, which was launched on 17 May 2009, our exposure and vulnerability to weather and climate hazards are growing, resulting in continued rises in the numbers and costs of disasters. Over the period 1991-2005, 3,470 million people were affected by disasters, 960,000 people died and economic losses amounted to US\$ 1.193 billion.

Poor countries are disproportionately affected, because of intrinsic vulnerabilities to hazards and comparatively low capacities for risk-reduction measures. In fact, disaster risk is accumulating largely as a result of unplanned settlements and environmental degradation. The poor have the most to lose in a disaster, both as individuals and as countries, as they lack the information, resources, capacities and social safety nets needed to protect their assets and livelihoods.

Distinguished Participants,

Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction is indeed, a venue to make a strategy to put a period to this trend. One of the most challenging tasks for disaster risk reduction is that our subject is so diverse and related with many other sectors that one single agency cannot manage it. In this sense, the situation is very similar to the one of water management, which also needs integrated approach. I am fully aware of the important concept of the "Integrated Water Resource Management." At the same time, I have been concerned that the IWRM was not implemented enough in the area of water-related disaster risk reduction in practice. Therefore, I strongly wish that the proposed mechanism of the HelpDesk for Integrated Flood Management would cause large ripples to make a significant change.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With the current climate change signal, most scientists agree with the future scenario of either too much water in some parts of the world and too little water in others. Climate change adaptation addresses various issues in various sectors such as health, sanitation, agriculture, energy, migration, security, disaster, etc., but it seems that the most fundamental issue is whether we have a capacity to manage water or not.

For example, in Vietnam, 18.5 million people live in the Mekong River Delta. What if the projected sea-level rise affects them? Of course, the sea-level rise is a slow and gradual process, but without

building a concrete policy at the national level, those people would suffer from negative impacts sooner or later. When we think of combined climate change impacts by strengthened tropical cyclones and sea-level rise there, the risk would become very high without taking appropriate disaster risk reduction measures.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ISDR secretariat has been seriously concerned with the increasing water-related disaster risks and supporting global efforts to reduce the risks led by partner agencies, including WMO.

We have been supporting the activities of the International Flood Initiative, one of the ISDR thematic platforms, of which WMO is a member. We have been voicing the importance of this subject at the UN Water. Also, as you heard this morning, the “Water and Disaster” Action Plan, report of the High-Level Expert Panel on Water and Disaster/UNSGAB, launched by H.E. Dr. Han Seung-soo, Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea is inviting follow-up actions.

I am confident that the IFM HelpDesk would work closely with ongoing efforts and provide a comprehensive guidance to a wide range of actors, including water resource managers, disaster risk managers, and climate change adaptation stakeholders.

Thank you.