

**WMO MESSAGE AT THE LAUNCHING OF THE
HELPDESK FOR INTEGRATED FLOOD MANAGEMENT**

**by M. Jarraud
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**Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,
Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), I wish to welcome you to the launching of the HelpDesk for Integrated Flood Management. As you are aware, the concept of integrated flood management is based on the principle of multi-disciplinary collaboration, with hydrology, meteorology and climatology providing flood managers the key inputs, whilst also incorporating a wider range of inputs from any other scientific and social disciplines which may also be relevant to the achievement of Integrated Flood Management objectives.

Accordingly, WMO and over 20 partner organizations have joined their efforts to ensure the multidisciplinary support demanded by such an approach. Together, they represent a critical mass of Members, International Organizations, development partners and specialized centres of excellence. Furthermore, we are confident that the number of participating partners will tend to increase over the coming years.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We currently witness an aggravation of flood issues in terms of the associated loss of lives, economic damages and degradation of floodplains' long-term productivity. In many parts of the world, vast sectors of the population's livelihoods depend, directly or indirectly, on the resources provided by flood-prone lands. Issues such as population pressure, climate variability and change, as well as constantly degrading ecosystems, represent just one side of the multiple factors contributing to increase flood risks, whereas another critical aspect is the result of insufficient planning and natural resource management practices, on which we should perhaps expect to have a far more decisive influence. Altogether, these factors are responsible for a situation where thousands of lives and property valued in billions of US dollars are lost, every year, on account of insufficiently managed flooding.

In this situation, it is of paramount importance to appropriately balance development needs and flood risks. There is considerable evidence worldwide that people may not readily abandon the flood-prone areas which provide their source of livelihood and, under special circumstances, they may simply be unable to do so. Accordingly, there is often a need to ensure sustainability in the flood plains, even at considerable risk to life and property. This is, however, an objective which can often only be achieved through an integrated approach to flood management.

Since 2001, WMO and the Global Water Partnership have facilitated global cooperation in support of such an integrated approach through the Associated Programme on Flood Management, in particular through various advocacy initiatives at national and regional scale, regional pilot projects and capacity building activities. Their joint efforts have contributed to the development of a robust consensus on the necessary flood management objectives and principles and, indeed, the evidence of such a consensus can be found in a number of high-level initiatives like the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015) and the International Flood Initiative, as well as in the relevant policy statements of UN Water, expressing the policy consensus of some 26 UN System Agencies with key competence in the water area.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The HelpDesk for Integrated Flood Management responds to an increasing need for robust and sustainable flood management policies, strategies and capacity building arrangements at country and river basin levels. In the present context, robustness signifies that flood management principles and strategies are to be formulated in pursuit of comprehensive development goals, whereby each sector of the economy has a bearing on the way in which floods are managed. In particular, various national ministries and their competent agencies will contribute to the overall design, formulation and subsequent transformation of policy objectives into concrete actions, thereby maximizing the chances that flood management actions will indeed have a positive impact on the overall improvement of livelihoods, poverty reduction, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, among other key development objectives.

In this context, I wish to recall that WMO, Switzerland and the UN System Delivering as One will convene the World Climate Conference-3 in Geneva from 31 August to 4 September, with the capacity-developing objective to deploy current advances in climate prediction and information services in support of climate-related risk management and decision-making.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The development of the Associated Programme on Flood Management and its flagship HelpDesk activity has been possible thanks to the dedicated efforts of several Members and partners, so I would like to seize the opportunity to express WMO's appreciation to Japan and Switzerland, for their continued support to the programme. Likewise, my appreciation goes to all those institutions which have provided input and support to the HelpDesk concept.

In closing, I wish you very fruitful deliberations and a successful conduct of your sessions in the context of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Thank you.