



EWC III

Third International Conference on Early Warning

From concept to action

27-29 March 2006
Bonn, Germany

First announcement

The Third International Conference on Early Warning will be hosted by Germany under the auspices of the United Nations from 27 to 29 March 2006 in Bonn.

Through the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster in December 2004, the world was reminded of the crucial importance of efficient early warning systems. Early warning and preparedness are the critical elements in preventing hazardous events from turning into disasters. Clear warnings, received in time, coupled with the knowledge of how to react, can make the difference between life and death, between economic survival and ruin, for individuals and for communities.



The conference should attract the interest of Governments, Parliaments, International Organizations, practitioners, experts in early warning and disaster risk, and the scientific community. It follows the *World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR)* in Kobe, Japan in January 2005, and will focus on the promotion of selected practical early warning projects. The UN Secretary-General has called for warning systems to cover all countries and all hazards. The subtitle of EWC III is "*From Concept to Action*" reflecting implementation of the *Hyogo Framework for Action* agreed in Kobe.

www.ewc3.org



Rationale and objectives

The basic aims of the conference are:

- to identify unused potentials in all areas of early warning,
- to select and help to implement specific early warning projects in order to bridge existing gaps,
- to stimulate action toward concrete follow-up projects, and
- to discuss proposals for global integration of early warning wherever possible and useful.

The conference will comprise two parallel but connected streams:

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

The conference organizers will invite the submission of potential projects on early warning systems. These may be new projects, projects under development, or the adaptation of existing projects to other situations. The identification of projects will be undertaken through a call for proposals in all regions of the world, using the regional mechanisms of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction (IATF/DR) and of the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR).

A selection process for the projects to be presented at the Conference will be put in place by the conference organisers. Projects will be chosen based on their impact, feasibility (both technical and financial), urgency, sustainability, efficiency, cost effectiveness and regional balance. A detailed catalogue of criteria will be sent to those handing in the "Indication of Interest" form and will be posted on the website.

Only a limited number of projects can be presented at the conference plenary. But all promising proposals will be collated in a portfolio of projects submitted to the conference participants, for appropriate review by interested parties and donors on a "market place".



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*, that took place in Bonn (Germany) from 16 to 18 October 2003, built upon principles developed at EWC'98. As a new element, it brought together eminent actors from the political and scientific world.
- The creation of the *Platform for the Promotion of Early Warning* (PPEW) in Bonn, Germany, in 2004 by the ISDR secretariat, with the support of the German Government, to lead the international community in developing early warning and preparedness.
- The adoption of the "Hyogo Framework for Action, 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters" at the *World Conference on Disaster Reduction* (WCDR) in Kobe, Hyogo (Japan) from 18 to 22 January 2005, underlined the importance of knowing risk and enhanced 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.



The relevance of Early Warning

Early warning is a major element of disaster risk reduction. Ideally it should prevent any loss of life and reduce 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 Knowledge: prior knowledge of the likely risk-scenarios communities are faced with;
- Monitoring and Warning Service: monitoring capacities for these risks and rapid and reliable decision mechanisms for early warning;
- Communication: dissemination of understandable warnings 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 2nd International Conference on Early Warning, 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, risk was known, as was vulnerability. The challenge is to build mechanisms that can avert natural hazards turning into disasters. One year after the deadly tsunami in the Indian Ocean, the 3rd International Conference on Early Warning seizes the opportunity to support the set-up of effective early warning/risk reduction mechanisms.

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. The conference will therefore focus one of its topics on the connection of "People, Politics and Economics": where on the globe do we find examples of simple and effective regulations for the early warning and the potential subsequent state of emergency?

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 focus on this aspect and it will be a criterion in the selection process of the projects to be presented in the Priorities and Projects Forum as well.

The Indian Ocean tsunami will not be the last mega disaster. An obvious question is whether big cities are prepared for a major earthquake, storm or flood event? 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. Thus both sides of the conference will engage with one another.

Organizational arrangements

The conference will be prepared through a mechanism of interacting stakeholders:

The Federal Foreign Office in Germany has set up an *EWC III Task Force* to organize the conference in co-operation with:

- A *conference secretariat* based in Geneva with the secretariat of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), supported by ISDR's Bonn-based PPEW, that will manage the conference programme;
- A *German supporting committee* coordinated by the Bonn-based German Committee for Disaster Reduction, DKKV, that will support the organizational work and logistics, and organize 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, from governments and from technical groups that will provide overall advice to the secretariat and the supporting committee.

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



Tentative programme

As described above, the conference will consist of two main parts, with additional activities and side-events. 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.

The Priorities and Projects Forum of the conference, which will take place in the Plenary Chamber, will discuss key issues in early warning, grouped around themes of high relevance. Hazards such as earthquakes, droughts, floods, landslides, tropical cyclones, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, winter storms, ... will be categorized under the headings of hazards of the earth, water and air. Each theme will be addressed through practical examples, with projects illustrating situations in all regions of the world.

	Priorities and Projects Forum	Scientific & Technical Symposium
Monday 27 March 2006		
Morning	Opening session in plenary	
Afternoon	Hazards of the Earth 5 regions	Mega events in Early Warning
Tuesday 28 March 2006		
Morning	Hazards of Water 5 regions	Multi-hazard approaches in Early Warning
Afternoon	Hazards of the Air 5 regions	People, politics, economics in Early Warning
Wednesday 29 March 2006		
Morning	Hazards of the Air (cont.) 5 regions	People, politics, economics in Early Warning (cont.)
Closing session (ends at 1 p.m.) in plenary		

The programme will be updated regularly on

www.ewc3.org



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Third International Conference
on Early Warning

From concept to action

27-29 March 2006
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Distributed by UNOOSA

Preliminary indication of interest
(Official registration will start 1 November 2005)

Please type or print in English in CAPITALS

Prof. Dr. Mr. Ms.

Family name _____

Given name _____

Organization _____

Department _____

Address _____

Postal code _____ City/town _____

Country _____

Telephone _____

Mobile phone _____

Fax _____

Email _____

I would like to submit an abstract for an oral presentation in the Scientific and Technical Symposium on the topic of (title):

My organization may be interested in proposing a project for the portfolio, in the field of (title):

Please provide me with information on the criteria

I am interested in contributing to or organizing a side-event on the topic of

I would like to make a poster presentation: please provide me with information

Funding for travel and accommodation will be provided for a limited number of participants from developing countries. Arrangements and modalities are yet to be worked out. Please indicate here if you want to be considered for such an eventuality

www.ewc3.org

Please mail, fax or email to the Secretariat of the EWC III

UN Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR)

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CH - 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

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Contact information

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

EWC III will be organized by

Federal Foreign Office

EWC III Task Force
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www.diplo.de

UN Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR)

Palais des Nations
CH - 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
www.unisdr.org

UN/ISDR Platform for the Promotion of Early Warning (PPEW)

Görresstrasse 30
D 53113 Bonn, Germany
www.unisdr-earlywarning.org

Deutsches Komitee für Katastrophenvorsorge e.V.

Tulpenfeld 4
D 53113 Bonn, Germany
www.dkkv.org

A second and last announcement for the EWC III will be issued in January 2006.

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

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