

Report of the Water and Disaster Working Group

16:30-18:00, 26th May, 2008

1. Objective of the WG session:

To hear the report of the *High-level Expert Panel on Water and Disaster/ UNSGAB* and discuss their proposals (page 353 of the material and the annexed matrix):

- Classification in 6 groups of the activities to be undertaken by the Panel,
- Potential goals, objectives and targets for each message proposed by WG co-chairs. The WG should give ideas for each group.
- What the Board can do to help the recommendations of the Panel to really be adopted and implemented

The following speakers made presentations: Ms. Meng, on the Sichuan earthquake; Mr. Oda, on the cyclone Nargis in Myanmar; and Mr. Hikaru Shoji, secretariat of the High-level Expert Panel, on the 2nd Panel meeting held in Seoul on January this year.

We had a very lively and useful debate, from which I will extract only a few conclusions:

- The existence of Disaster Preparedness Programmes can drastically reduce the loss of lives and livelihoods. Example: In a stronger cyclone last year, Bangladesh lost only about 3,000 lives, despite having a large population, because they have such a programme in place. Another example presented is the case of Cuba, which very frequently suffers from hurricanes, neither loosing lives nor livelihoods, as they have put in place a programme by which they evacuate people and their livelihoods, including animals.
- National governments need to be prepared for international cooperation after disasters, so that it can be used in a coordinated and coherent manner.
- The need to include information and disaster preparedness in the curriculum of education, so people learn early on to cope with such circumstances.
- Preparedness centers must be set up at the local level.

2. Decisions and Conclusions

The comments made by the participants of the working group will be incorporated by the Panel secretariat in the documents for the next Panel meeting to be held on June in Marseilles.

The conclusions of that Panel discussion will be reported to the next UNSGAB meeting, so that both bodies benefit from their reciprocally enriching debate and results achieved.

Participants

Honorary President
HIH Crown Prince of Japan

Members:

- Mr. Mahmoud Abu-zeid
- Ms. Juanita Castano
- Ms. Jocelyn Dow
- Mr. Hideaki Oda
- Mr. Eric Odada
- Mr. Yordan Uzunov

Observers:

- Mr. Babagana Ahmadu
- Mr. Ger Bergkamp
- Mr. Salvano Briceno
- Mr. Loic Fauchon
- Mr. Kenzo Hiroki
- Ms. Zhimin Meng
- Mr. Koos Wieriks