

News from the International Science Council

Science and Policy Forum at the United Nations Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

The Science and Policy Forum was held at the United Nations HQ in Geneva, Switzerland, 13-14 May 2019 and attracted 400 participants to discuss advances in science that support the implementation of the Sendai Framework and to identify critical knowledge needs on an integrated approach to disaster risk reduction (DRR). The Forum was organized by the International Science Council (ISC), the United Nations Office on Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), and the Integrated Research on Disaster Risk (IRDR) programme as a side event at the United Nations Global Platform for DRR (GP2019).

The Forum launched a UNDRR-ISC facilitated technical working group on hazards terminology to develop a common definition and language across the full scope of hazards covered by the Sendai framework. The panel on hazards terminology highlighted the need to put more emphasis on the study of how different types of hazards are interlinked, and may cascade across sectors, time and geographical scales. The Sendai framework focuses on understanding risks which require the engagement with the local communities that face risks and need to cope with them.



Panel discussion. From left: chair Alik Ismail-Zadeh (Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Germany); Ravi Sinha (Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, India), Markus Reichstein (Max-Planck Institute for Biogeochemistry Jena, Germany); Noboru Takamura (Fukushima University, Japan); Wenjian Zhang (World Meteorological Organization); Virginia Murray (Public Health England, UK); John Handmer (University of Melbourne, Australia); and Jonathan Abrahams (World Health Organization). Photo: Irasema Alcántara-Ayala.

Addressing the challenges around the lack of data, big data, data quality, use and interoperability are critical to enhance capacities for the use of data meaningfully and for better understanding and managing risks. Major advances in the use of technology for disaster management and major potentials for future deployments were discussed at the Forum; particularly, the use of drones in disaster situations helps to assess damage, guide first responders, deliver equipment, medicine, etc. It was mentioned that there is a need for international cooperation and regulations for

disruptive technologies, and systems-wide resilience to address technological hazards. Strengthening resilience and achieving DRR requires collaboration among and between science, policymakers, and society to meet short term information needs to anticipate and mitigate long-term impacts.

The High-Level Dialogue at GP2019

Progress made in implementing the Sendai Framework was topic of the High-level dialogue at GP2019. Moderator *Beatrice Marshall*, Kenyan news anchor, opened the dialogue introducing the purpose of the session. In a keynote speech, *Malini Mehra*, Chief Executive of the GLOBE International, outlined statistics on the increasing number of disasters, which have caused the displacement of some 265 million people since 2008, more than three times as many as those caused by conflicts. She called for addressing not only natural hazards but also the man-made risks of technologies such as artificial intelligence and geoengineering. *Kirsi Madi*, Director of UNDRR, further commented on the impacts of disasters in displacing people and costing USD 500 billion to economies worldwide.

Ulziisaikhan Enkhvshin, Deputy Prime Minister, Mongolia, summarized his regional platform's emphasis on resilient infrastructure and risk-informed development. *Feliks Tsolakyan*, Minister of Emergency Situations, Armenia, highlighted the relevance of reducing risk to promote further infrastructure development. *Edoardo Rixi*, Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, Italy, announced the establishment of a regional coalition to discuss safety of infrastructure and emerging risks such as threats to cybersecurity. Ambassador *Walid Doudech*, Tunisia, highlighted two regional ministerial declarations and the focus on dedicated funding to advance implementation of the Sendai Framework. *Eduardo José González Angulo*, Director-General, National Unit for Disaster Risk Management, Colombia, highlighted work in his country and region on financial protection and the reduction of financial vulnerability in the face of disaster. *Alik Ismail-Zadeh*, Secretary of the International Science Council, talked about the need for collaboration across science, policymakers and society for success in DRR.



Alik Ismail-Zadeh speaks at the High-Level Dialogue of the GP2019. Photos: Irasema Alcántara-Ayala.

Source: ISC and UNDRR website