

Meeting Minutes of the Subcommittee on Disaster Reduction

3 April 2003 from 10:00am-12:00pm, Office of Science and Technology Policy, Conference Room

Names of absent members are indicated in italics.

Officers

Helen Wood (NOAA), Chair
John Filson (USGS), Vice-Chair for Science
Margaret Lawless (FEMA), Vice-Chair for Policy

Working Group Chairs

Remote Sensing Applications Working Group
Rosalind Helz (USGS), Co-Chair
Steve Ambrose (NASA), Co-Chair

International Working Group

Larry Roeder, Jr. and
Fernando Echavarria (State), Co-Chair
Larry Weber (NSF), Co-Chair

Designated Representatives

CDC

Josephine Malilay

DOD

Earnest Paylor

EPA

Peter Jutro

FEMA

Margaret Lawless

FERC

Dan Mahoney

HUD

John Kennedy

Kevin Sheehan (alternate)

NASA

Steve Ambrose

NIST

Shyam Sunder

Noel Raufaste (alternate)

NOAA

Helen Wood

NRO

Keith Fennell

NSF

Priscilla Nelson

OHS

Bill Jeffrey

OMB

Erin McCartney

Gary Reisner

Jason Freihage

OSTP

Gene Whitney

State

Fernando Echavarria

Larry Roeder, Jr.

USACE

Michael O'Connor

USCG

Ernesto Montijo

USFS

Sue Conard

Clark Baldwin (alternate)

US Public Health Office

Eric Noji

USGS

Tim Cohn

Other Attendees

American Meteorological Society

Bill Hooke

NIST

David Evans

NOAA

Chris Lewis (NESDIS/IA)

Darci Glass-Royal

Donna Franklin (NWS)

Dori Akerman (GRS)

John Gaynor (USWRP)

Levin Lauritson (NESDIS)

NSF

Dennis Wenger

Larry Weber

State

Eric Falls

Jonathan Turak

UN ISDR

Sálvano Briceño

USACE

Andy Bruzewicz

USAID

Harry Proctor (OFDA)

Rhonda Davis (OFDA)

USGS

Kathleen Gohn

Rosalind Helz

Agenda

10:00 Welcome and Introductions
10:05 Approval of Summary from Last Meeting
10:10 Report from the Chair
10:25 Working Group, International
10:35 Briefing, International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR)
11:40 Report from the OSTP Liaison
11:55 Working Group, Remote Sensing Applications
12:00 Close

Handouts

Agenda
Minutes, March 2003 Meeting
Minutes, February 2003 Meeting
International Working Group: Draft White Paper
Remote Sensing Applications Working Group:
Meeting Minutes, SAR outline
SDR Materials: two-pager, contact list
Partnership for Public Warning Conference Flyer
ISDR Materials: magazine, newsletter, CD's

Call to Order

Chair Helen Wood called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

Summary of Discussion

1. Report from the Chair

Ms. Helen Wood provided an update on the recent activities of the SDR leadership, and described the formation of the Earth Observations Forum. The Earth Observations Forum is under consideration as a topic for the Fall 2003 National Research Council Disasters Forum and, if there is interest, may be organized in cooperation with the SDR. The idea began with the Earth Observations Summit, an activity of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources and scheduled for July 31, 2003. The Earth Observations Forum will be a follow-on event to the Summit and is intended to facilitate and enhance communication and the exchange of ideas among scientists, practitioners, and policymakers. The Forum will be an occasion to identify urgent and important issues related to understanding and mitigating natural disasters. Specifics of the event are still under development, and it is possible that agencies may be asked to bear a small part of the cost. Andy Bruzewicz asked if anything were being done to address the issue of spatial resolution. Ms. Wood answered, noting that this is an opportunity to share the SDR vision and address critical requirements.

The SDR Secretariat provided an update on the SDR presentation to the March 27, 2003 meeting of CENR subcommittees. The Secretariat also distributed current editions of the SDR two-pager and contact list.

2. Report from the International Working Group

International Working Group (IWG) co-chairs Larry Roeder, Jr., Fernando Echavarría, and Larry Weber reported on the recent activities of the Working Group. Mr. Weber announced a special meeting sponsored by the International Working Group and scheduled for May 20, 2003. The meeting will feature presentations by individuals connected with DC-based international organizations including, but not limited to, the World Bank and the Organization of American States.

Mr. Echavarría reported on the status of the International White Paper, and circulated interim drafts of the document. The International White Paper will be a compendium of information on international programs, and will be dynamic, public document available on the SDR website. Christopher Lewis reminded members of the April 15, 2003 deadline for contributions. The next draft of the document is due to members on May 1, 2003 and the final draft will be available on the SDR website by May 29, 2003.

3. Briefing, International Strategy on Disaster Reduction

Mr. Larry Roeder, Jr. introduced Salvano Briceño, the Director of the United Nations (UN) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR). The United States is currently developing a National Platform for the ISDR, led by the State Department for the policy aspects of the platform, and by the SDR for the science aspects of the platform. The International Working Group members invited Mr. Briceño to visit the United States in order to provide additional information and background as the United States forms the National Platform.

ISDR History: Mr. Briceño began his presentation with a brief history of the ISDR, from the establishment of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1990-2000) to the

creation of the ISDR as a successor organization. In 2000, the ISDR became a separate, inter-agency function of the UN tasked with coordinating the many disaster reduction functions in the various UN agencies.

ISDR Structure: ISDR is based in Geneva, with representatives in San Jose and Nairobi today, and in Fiji by the end of this year. ISDR activities and reports are directed toward developing countries. This focus recognizes the great need in those countries, and the many opportunities for the ISDR to serve a catalytic role.

ISDR Activities: The key focus of ISDR is education and outreach achieved through documents, events, and other tools. ISDR creates a variety of documents, among them an annual report entitled “Living with Risk: A Global Review of Disaster Reduction Initiatives.” ISDR also publishes a monthly newsletter; magazines targeted to local, developing populations; and a game called Riskland, developed to be children’s game and individualized for various local cultures, languages and disasters.

ISDR reaches out through a variety of events and activities, including the International Day of Disaster Reduction, which is always the second week of October and occurs again on October 8 of this year. ISDR will use the occasion to give out awards totaling \$50,000 to the organizations with the most important role in disaster reduction this year: \$40,000 to one single, influential organization; and \$10,000 to be divided among three other organizations. ISDR is also the key planner for Yokohama+11, an event scheduled for January 2005.

Questions and Answers

Gene Whitney: What can the United States can do to help?

Mr. Briceño: There are many things the United States can do:

1. Join the ISDR mailing list and read the quarterly newsletter;
2. Share US information and documentation; and
3. Look at the ISDR work program and work through the ISDR to connect into ISDR-created networks.

Priscilla Nelson: What about information on how to use disaster recovery as an opportunity for mitigation?

Mr. Briceño: It is important to realize that the structures within developing nation governments are not in place, and much of the work of the ISDR relates to raising awareness so that citizens will put pressure on the politicians.

Kathleen Gohn: Does SDR as a whole want to do something to make more out of world Disaster Reduction Day?

Mr. Briceño: Yes, it is an excellent opportunity to increase awareness.

Thoughts and Reactions: Helen Wood addressed several opportunities for interaction between the US and the ISDR:

- we need to reduce the economic costs, not just the loss of life;
- association between the two organizations brings increased visibility;
- endorsement for strategic approaches increases visibility;
- working through the International Working Group and the SDR increases the possibilities to spot opportunities;
- working with the National Academy of the Sciences and the Partnership for Public Warning increases effectiveness;

- we need to create workshops and fora for improved awareness (e.g., the Earth Observations Summit).

These activities form the basis for an engagement strategy in which the SDR is eager to play a role. Mr. Briceño agreed completely, noting that this is a collaboration of mutual interest, and adding that the ISDR is always pleased to help and add value.

Conclusion: Mr. Briceño and Ms. Wood concluded that disaster reduction is a subject that unites people and that the conversations between ISDR and SDR are the beginning of reengagement and the framework for additional meetings. Mr. Briceño asked to invite DC-based partners such as the World Bank and the Organization of American States to future meetings and the SDR agreed to create a forum for such a conversation.

Actions: (1) Secretariat to send an email with the web links to the ISDR documents, and will bring copies of the CD's to the next meeting. (2) Copies of the report also are available online at www.unisdr.org/unisdr/Globalreport.htm.

4. Comments from OSTP liaison

Mr. Whitney offered a general philosophical statement related to SDR documents, and asked the SDR to consider shorter documents in the future (e.g., no more than two to three pages). He also proposed the SDR write a letter to the President highlighting the top two or three priority disaster issues. This activity could be coordinated with the Natural Disaster Roundtable, or other relevant organizations, though any document must still be approved through the SDR and CENR members. Tim Cohn suggested two critical things to highlight in such a letter: (1) the need for improved monitoring systems for the globe; and (2) the need for an effective warnings system. Priscilla Nelson highlighted three priority areas: (1) Cyber-infrastructure and IT; (2) the critical need for Social Science research; and (3) physical infrastructure.

Relative to this topic, Helen Wood noted the opportunity to link with the Partnership for Public Warnings and added that the SDR could consider using the Warnings White Paper (currently in draft form) as a two-page tutorial. She also noted the opportunity to weigh in on the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP) framework. It was agreed that any document, regardless of topic, must answer the following questions:

- (1) What are the key issues for this topic?
- (2) What is the “so what?”
- (3) What do we recommend?
- (4) Why now?

A warnings ad hoc task group could be structured to complete the work begun on the Warnings White Paper, and other task groups could be created as needed to address other timely topics. This work also will require inter-sessional discussions. The group agreed that a one-day internal working day also may be necessary to work through all of these topics.

Actions: (1) Members are to suggest topics for these two-page tutorials and for the letter to the President. Suggestions should be sent to the Secretariat, dori@grs-solutions.com. (2) Priscilla Nelson agreed to create an informal discussion on cyber-infrastructure for disaster reduction.

5. Report from the Remote Sensing Applications Working Group

Rosalind Helz, co-chair of the Remote Sensing Applications Working Group (RSAWG), reported on the recent activities of the Working Group. She discussed the recent meeting of the Working Group and referred members to the working group meeting minutes. She also distributed the final outline of the “SAR Presentation to the Senate Natural Hazards Caucus” for SDR approval. SDR members approved the outline unanimously.

6. Agenda Items and Other Communications with the Subcommittee

Please send proposed agenda items and any other items intended for distribution to the full Subcommittee to Dori Akerman (dori@grs-solutions.com) by April 28, 2003.

7. Contact Information

SDR Leadership

Helen Wood, Chair, 301-457-5120, helen.wood@noaa.gov
John Filson, Co-Chair for Science, 703-648-6715, jfilson@usgs.gov
Margaret Lawless, Co-Chair for Policy, 202-646-3027, margaret.lawless@fema.gov

International Working Group

Larry Roeder, Jr., Co-Chair, 202-647-5070, roederla@state.gov
Fernando Echavarría, Co-Chair, 202-663-2395, echavarrifr@state.gov
Larry Weber, Co-Chair, 703-292-7240, lweber@nsf.gov

Remote Sensing Applications Working Group

Rosalind Helz, Co-Chair, 703-648-6086, rhelz@usgs.gov
Steve Ambrose, Co-Chair, 202-358-0851, sambrose@hq.nasa.gov

Secretariat

Dori Akerman, 703-560-7448, dori@grs-solutions.com

8. Future Meetings

The SDR meets on the first or second Thursday of every month at 10am in the White House Conference Center. Upcoming meeting dates:

June 5, 2003	10am – 12pm	Eisenhower Room
July 10, 2003	10am – 12pm	Eisenhower Room
August 7, 2003	10am – 12pm	Eisenhower Room
September 11, 2003	10am – 12pm	Eisenhower Room
October 2, 2003	10am – 12pm	Eisenhower Room
November 13, 2003	10am – 12pm	Eisenhower Room
December 4, 2003	10am – 12pm	Eisenhower Room

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 pm.