

# Discussion Draft

## Meeting Minutes of the Subcommittee on Disaster Reduction

31 March 2009, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., Department of Commerce, Room 5215

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Italics indicate absent members. "T" indicate members participating via teleconference.

### Officers

David Applegate (USGS), Chair  
Dennis Wenger (NSF), Vice-Chair  
*Margaret Davidson (NOAA)*

### NSTC Liaison

Jonathan Kolak (OSTP)

### Designated Representatives

**BLM** *Edwin Roberson*

*Ronald Huntsinger*

**CDC** *Mark Keim*

**DHS** Bruce Davis

**DHS/FEMA** *Deborah Ingram*

**DHS/USCG** *Steven Cohen*

**DOD** *Al Johnson*

**DOE** *Patricia Hoffman*

**DOT** *Sheila Duwadi*

*Cheryl McQueary*

*Tim Schmidt*

**EOP / OSTP** Jonathan Kolak

**EDA** *Audrey Clarke*

**EPA** *Peter Jutro*

*Stephen Clark*

**FERC** *Berne Mosley*

**HUD** *David Engel*

**NASA** *Andrea Donnellan*

**NGA** *Stephen Homeyer*

**NGB** *Daniel Boicchio*

**NIH** *Allen Dearth*

**NIST** *William Grosshandler*

*Jack Hayes*

**NOAA** John Gaynor

**NSF** Dennis Wenger

**OPHS** *Sven Rodenbeck (T)*

**State** *Cari Enav*

*Fernando Echavarria*

**USACE** *Barbara J. Sotirin*

*Dimitra Syriopoulou*

**USAID** *Sezin Tokar*

**USDA** TBD

**USFS** *Carlos Rodriguez-*

*Franco*

**USGS** *David Applegate*

*Paula Gori*

### Other Attendees

**DHS/FEMA** Candice Abinanti

**EPA** Brendan Doyle

**NOAA** Maria Honeycutt

Jamie Rhome

**NGA** Dana Miller

**NGB** Lisa Burg

Dave Wilmot

**Secretariat** Emily Wallace

Ross Faith

**State** Nellie Moore

### Agenda

10:00 Welcome and Introductions

10:05 UN/ISDR Briefing

11:00 Report from 1<sup>st</sup> Session of the Regional  
Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the  
Americas

11:15 Approval of March 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes

11:20 Report from the Chair

11:35 Report from the Vice-Chairs

11:45 Report from the NSTC Liaison

11:55 Close and Next Actions

### Handouts

- Agenda
- March 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes
- SDR Suggested Priorities for the  
FY2011 OSTP-OMB Memo

# Discussion Draft

## **I. Call to Order and Introductions**

Subcommittee on Disaster Reduction (SDR) Chair David Applegate (USGS) called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. He welcomed and introduced Margareta Wahlström, who serves in the dual role of United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

## **II. UN/ISDR Briefing**

Assistant Secretary-General Margareta Wahlström (UN) thanked SDR Members for the opportunity to speak to them about the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR).

Wahlström stated that one of the key challenges in the field of disaster risk reduction is figuring out how to bridge the gap dividing good science and technology from decision-making.

Wahlström noted that from March 23<sup>rd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> in Oslo, Norway, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Working Group II held a scoping meeting at which it agreed to propose that the IPCC undertake writing a Special Report on “Extreme Events and Disasters: Managing the Risks.” The wider IPCC will decide whether to move forward with the report at its 30<sup>th</sup> Session, April 21<sup>st</sup>—23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009, in Antalya, Turkey. If endorsed, the report would take about two years to write.

Wahlström cited climate change as a powerful new ingredient that is increasing disaster risk and stressed the importance of mitigating risk by pursuing adaptation strategies. She underscored the need to come up with a convincing, long-term risk reduction plan which, among other things, clearly points out that adaptation strategies are actually development strategies for places like Africa and similarly vulnerable regions.

The ISDR was initially launched in 2000 and global interest in its agenda increased markedly on the heels of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. As a result of the disaster, attendance at ISDR’s January 2005 meeting in Kobe, Japan, doubled to nearly 1200 individuals, including many key decision-makers. The meeting resulted in the Hyogo Framework for Action, which stands as the most comprehensive strategic framework for reducing disaster risk at the global, regional, and local levels.

Wahlström explained that the ISDR organizational structure includes a Secretariat based in Geneva and regional hubs in Nairobi, Bangkok, Dushanbe, Panama, and Cairo. Wahlström characterized the role of the ISDR Secretariat as facilitating, catalyzing, networking, and generating action.

The ISDR has matured over the past few years and emphasis has shifted from creating buy-in among various stakeholders to moving forward with the actual implementation of disaster risk reduction strategies, which, in turn, has elevated the importance of work at the regional level. She described the ISDR as a resource for governments and organizations to leverage in their disaster risk reduction efforts and stated that the ISDR is encouraging governments and organizations to utilize this expertise.

Wahlström stressed the need to enlist the entire UN “machinery” in disaster risk reduction and explained that the effort to make this cause an over-arching priority of the UN has been largely successful. She noted that translating high-level endorsement of the cause into local, programmatic application has not yet occurred on a widespread basis, but she expected that proscriptive guidance on disaster risk reduction would be rolled-out to field officers in the near future. Wahlström also specified that developing countries need to be outfitted with technologies, tools, and methodologies to bolster their capacity for reducing risk.

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The 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction will be held June 16<sup>th</sup>—18<sup>th</sup>, in Geneva ([www.preventionweb.net/globalplatform/2009/](http://www.preventionweb.net/globalplatform/2009/)). Organized around panels, the Global Platform is the main global, multi-stakeholder forum on disaster risk reduction, bringing together the UN, national governments, the science community, and others to discuss – rather than negotiate – various aspects of disaster risk reduction, which this year will include climate change and financing. Wahlström stated that one focus of the meeting will be answering the question of how to increase government interest in risk reduction; another will explore whether risk reduction funds should be integrated into budgets or be counted as separate line-items. Wahlström expected future Global Platforms to incorporate panels focusing on urban risk and community resilience.

Wahlström also announced that the ISDR is presently working with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank to produce a biennial Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction (GAR/DDR). The first GAR/DDR will be launched in Bahrain, May 17<sup>th</sup>—18<sup>th</sup>, 2009, and should be completed sometime this autumn. More information and related studies on disaster risk management are available at: [www.worldbank.org/hazards](http://www.worldbank.org/hazards).

The 2009 GAR/DDR represents a collaborative effort being undertaken by several UN agencies and partners, member states, regional inter-governmental and technical institutions, civil society networks, academic institutions and other ISDR System partners. The report will aim to focus global media and political attention on the problem of disaster risk. It will present an analysis of emerging disaster and climatic risk patterns and trends, in particular those related to poverty and human development concerns. It also will present a comprehensive review of progress by countries in implementing disaster risk reduction measures, within the context of achieving sustainable development goals. Wahlström noted that the 2009 GAR/DDR will seek to answer the question of whether disaster risk reduction justifies investment.

Wahlström pointed out that as the world becomes richer, more urbanized, and more sophisticated, it becomes more vulnerable to disasters. In support of this observation, she asked what would happen if a major earthquake were to strike Tokyo. Wahlström stated that the ability to move and migrate – one of humanity's traditional methods of coping with disasters – is becoming less viable in the modern era. She also stated that historical migration patterns do not support the theory that people will move when threatened by climate change.

According to Wahlström, the disaster risk reduction community tends to focus only on the big disasters and not enough on the smaller-scale events. She stated that no one is factoring in the impact on people who do not reach the headlines, have no insurance, etc. These smaller-scale disasters, she observed, tend to escape the mind's eye, but they are nevertheless constant and recurring and better data is needed on them.

Wahlström posed the corresponding questions:

- Has anyone developed an accounting instrument that includes natural disasters?
- How do you calculate the cost of disasters? Afterward? In planning?
- What kind of national planning instruments do you use?
- What are effective arguments to make to heads of state to drive investment in disaster risk reduction? How should decision-makers prioritize projects?
- Many countries are rationalizing foreign aid and pulling back from funding multilateral programs. What happens if the 15 largest donors focus on the same 12 countries at the expense of others?

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David Applegate noted the theme within the disaster community of spreading knowledge and expertise through bilateral programs. He asked Wahlström if mechanisms exist to connect these programs to the ISDR framework.

Margareta Wahlström addressed the theme of information dissemination by posing the question of what phone number a government or organization should call to get the best possible advice on disaster-related science and technology. She noted that progress has been made in this area but added a formal disaster consulting “hotline” would require an extensive network of expertise.

Dennis Wenger (NSF) answered the question, noting that the ISDR Science and Technology Committee had discussed creating and graphing an inventory of such expertise.

Wahlström stated that the ISDR is hoping to make its Science and Technology Committee into a very active body. Wahlström then relayed an anecdote that a recent survey, conducted by a business-school student/climate scientist, found that decision-makers made roughly 70 percent of their decisions without the use of new scientific knowledge, and instead cited political, financial, and time constraints as major factors shaping their decisions. Wahlström stressed the need to find ways of changing this habit. She stated that the timely transfer of knowledge (i.e., scientific and technological expertise) is a huge challenge.

Paula Gori (USGS) asked if the overriding goal of the UN is to build up the ability and capacity of countries to handle their own disasters: that is, to create self-sufficient nations?

Wahlström affirmed Gori’s understanding of the UN mission. She cited the problem of moral hazard whereby nations are unintentionally but nevertheless conditioned to expect UN and other foreign assistance whenever disaster strikes, which creates a disincentive for them to mitigate against disasters on their own accord and with their own funding. Wahlström noted that many nations fall into this category, limiting their action to response while foregoing preparation and prevention. She stated that the UN would like to see stronger domestic capacities to respond to disasters of reasonable magnitude as well as a recognition of interdependency: that no country stands completely on its own.

John Gaynor (NOAA) asked Wahlström to comment on climate change and major events noting that diverging climate change projections often have the effect of confusing and paralyzing rather than empowering and motivating the potential user of such data. Gaynor asked Wahlström if she thought removing climate change from the discussion and just focusing on events would lead to better results in disaster risk reduction.

Wahlström responded by noting humanity’s infatuation with Hollywood disaster films. She observed that the relative dearth of prevention efforts in the real world lies at odds with the human instinct for self-preservation and demonstrations of compassion. To resolve this paradox, Wahlström advised educating the public about the increasing risks posed by disasters – rather than climate change *per se* – and stressed the importance of educating local communities about potential ramifications as a way to foment action. Wahlström characterized public education as the all-important means to stay in charge of the disaster conversation. She cited Japan as a model to follow in terms of disaster risk reduction and related science, technology, education, drills, and preparation efforts.

Jon Kolak (OSTP) asked Wahlström what the ISDR hopes will come out of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Platform in Geneva.

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Wahlström noted that the ISDR designed the Global Platform as a multi-stakeholder event driving towards concrete recommendations, which will be captured in the Chairman's official summary. She said she hopes the discussions will yield strategies for helping local governments with disaster risk reduction planning, funding, technology access, and instrumentation for quick improvement. A recommendation flowing from the Kobe conference in 2005 held that countries should allocate 10 percent of disaster funding to risk reduction. The ISDR currently recommends that 1 percent of all national development plans should go to risk reduction. She said she hopes the 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Platform will make headway in identifying the constraints to achieving these funding targets. Wahlström also acknowledged that it is difficult to decipher where this money should go to be most effective. She noted that governments are often adverse to setting targets, but because they serve to stimulate action, she hoped participants would agree to some small and simple ones. Target outcomes from the conference are not binding but serve more as moral motivators (i.e., how many schools or hospitals or critical infrastructure links could be saved). Wahlström also noted that given the strong interest in climate issues, she expected good discussions on the topic.

On behalf of the SDR, David Applegate thanked Assistant Secretary-General Wahlström for her interesting and thought-provoking presentation.

### **III. Report from 1<sup>st</sup> Session of the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas**

Cari Enav (State) reported that she attended the 1<sup>st</sup> Session of the Regional Program for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas, held in Panama, March 16<sup>th</sup>—19<sup>th</sup>. Enav stated that the Platform was well-attended by policy-makers, scientists, World Bank officials, and NGO representatives. She noted that the conference participants were continuously engaged in networking and keen to pick up best practices.

Enav observed that the U.S. has the ability to significantly contribute to disaster risk reduction in the region and identified the need to decide upon the best mechanism(s) to do so. Enav stated that she brought nearly 50 *Grand Challenges for Disaster Reduction* packets, which “sold out” very quickly. Enav noted that there was a wide disparity among the countries in attendance in terms of development and sophistication of their respective disaster risk reduction programs. One refrain from the conference was the question of how do we link up and partner.

Enav reported that the conference included a session on disaster risk reduction governance and policy-making. Jamaica voiced the opinion that IMF and World Bank funding should be conditioned on states incorporating disaster risk reduction efforts into their domestic budgets.

Enav reported that she met with staff members of CATHALAC, which works to implement SERVIR, a U.S.-sponsored program that leverages Earth observations to reduce disaster losses.

Enav recommended that U.S. officials who plan to participate in the ISDR's 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Platform in June should soon meet to discuss U.S. priorities for the conference.

Margareta Wahlström announced that the 2<sup>nd</sup> African Regional Platform would be meeting in Nairobi in May, 2009. She encouraged U.S. officials to participate.

### **IV. Amendment and Approval of the March 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes**

The March 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes were approved with one amendment. Jon Kolak requested changes be made to his comment: “...an effort to stand up a storm surge/coastal inundation working group might take months, not weeks.” The sentence has been removed from the minutes.

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## V. Report from the Chair

Subcommittee Chair David Applegate opened his report with a request for participants to help draft a terms of reference for the storm surge/coastal inundation working group. Interested agencies should submit names of individuals to the SDR Secretariat ([ewallace@grs-solutions.com](mailto:ewallace@grs-solutions.com)). Agencies currently represented include DOT, NASA, NIST, NOAA, USAID, and the USFS.

Applegate reported that the SDR has provided its input to the FY11 OSTP-OMB Budget Priorities Memo and thanked Members for their contributions. Applegate noted that SDR input focused on the *Grand Challenges* and climate change issues.

Applegate reminded Members about the 2009 Annual Hazards Research and Applications Workshop, July 15<sup>th</sup>—18<sup>th</sup>, 2009, at the Omni Interlocken Resort, just outside of Boulder, Colorado. Members should inform Dave or the Secretariat ([ewallace@grs-solutions.com](mailto:ewallace@grs-solutions.com)) if they are interested in attending.

## VI. Report from the Vice-Chairs

Vice-Chair Dennis Wenger reminded Members that it is never too late to send information to [dwenger@nsf.gov](mailto:dwenger@nsf.gov) regarding agency interactions with the ISDR and added that any input would be much appreciated.

## VII. Report from the NSTC Liaison

NSTC Liaison Jon Kolak reported that the WindHRP working group is diligently laboring to complete the 2007-08 Windstorm Impact Reduction Biennial Report to Congress. He noted that OSTP has held discussions regarding the clearance process; once ready, the document will be transmitted to the SDR for agency approval, then on to OSTP/OMB, and thereafter to Congress. It will not undergo CENR review. The report should be ready for the SDR to review by the end of next week.

## VIII. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

## IX. Future Meetings

The SDR meets on the first or second Thursday of every month from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. unless otherwise noted.

May 7, 2009	August 6, 2009	November 5, 2009
June 4, 2009	September 3, 2009	December 3, 2009
July 2, 2009	October 1, 2009	

## X. 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 Emily Wallace ([ewallace@grs-solutions.com](mailto:ewallace@grs-solutions.com)).

## XI. Contact Information SDR Leadership

David Applegate, Chair, 703-648-6714, [applegate@usgs.gov](mailto:applegate@usgs.gov)  
Margaret Davidson, Vice Chair, 843-740-1220, [Margaret.davidson@noaa.gov](mailto:Margaret.davidson@noaa.gov)  
Dennis Wenger, Vice Chair, 703-292-8606, [dwenger@nsf.gov](mailto:dwenger@nsf.gov)  
Jon Kolak, NSTC Liaison, 202-456-6081, [jkolak@ostp.eop.gov](mailto:jkolak@ostp.eop.gov)



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## Secretariat

Emily Wallace, 703-560-7448, ewallace@grs-solutions.com

## XII. Summary of March Actions

Action	Lead	By When
Send invitation to participate in the ISDR's 2 <sup>nd</sup> Global Platform to SDR Members	SDR Secretariat	April 3, 2009
Send nominations to the ad hoc committee that will draft a terms of reference for a new SDR working group on storm surge/coastal inundation to Emily Wallace ( <a href="mailto:ewallace@grs.solutions.com">ewallace@grs.solutions.com</a> ).	SDR Members	April 17, 2009
Let Emily know if you are interested in attending the Annual Hazards Workshop in Boulder ( <a href="mailto:ewallace@grs-solutions.com">ewallace@grs-solutions.com</a> ).	SDR Members	ASAP
Send a summary of any agency activity related to ISDR to Dennis Wenger ( <a href="mailto:dwenger@nsf.gov">dwenger@nsf.gov</a> ).	SDR Members	Standing
SDR financial support: Contact Dave ( <a href="mailto:applegate@usgs.gov">applegate@usgs.gov</a> ) if you would like a personalized support request letter to your agency.	SDR Members	Standing
Contact Emily ( <a href="mailto:ewallace@grs-solutions.com">ewallace@grs-solutions.com</a> ) to receive copies of the Grand Challenges for Disaster Reduction Implementation Plan packets or CD.	SDR Members	Standing
Let Emily or Dave know how you use the implementation plans, including when you link to the plans from your agency websites.	SDR Members	Standing
Send Emily or Dave additional distribution suggestions, including relevant contact information.	SDR Members	Standing
Coordinate a CODE briefing to the SDR.	Secretariat	Spring 2009