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UNU-IAS's Contribution to the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

From 14 to 18 March 2015, the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction was held in Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture, Japan. In the conference, the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015 was reviewed and a new framework, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 was adopted. Over 150,000 people participated in some part of the conference and related events, with over 6,500 participants attending the main conference.

The United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS) participated in the working sessions at the conference and even organized the four side events in the official public forum as described below.

Transdisciplinary Education for Disaster Risk Reduction

Reflecting on the University Network for Climate and Ecosystems Change Adaptation Research's implementation of transdisciplinary

disaster risk reduction (DRR) programmes, this side event explored the role and need of multi-stakeholder partnerships in developing and delivering effective transdisciplinary education and capacity development programmes in the field of DRR. During the event, the International Network for Advancing Transdisciplinary Education (INATE) was launched.

Integrated Water Cycle Management for Disaster Risk Reduction

With the increase in urban flood risk brought about by urbanization and climate change, sustainable approaches to urban water management are imperative for successful DRR. This side event highlighted various water cycle management experiences from different countries and discussed the opportunities and challenges in developing future strategies. The speakers called for integrating and combining water management with the operation of centralized and decentralized systems, the promotion of green infrastructures, and increased community participation.

Risk Reduction and the Transition from Response to Recovery: Lessons from Japan's Triple Disasters

This panel explored the challenges of transitioning from immediate disaster response to longer-term recovery reflecting issues such as the needs of evacuees and affected communities, housing, employment and medical care based on lessons from the March 2011 'triple disasters' in Japan. The interactive discussion with the audience explored issues including the regulation of nuclear power in Japan, the vulnerability of elderly people in the event of disasters, and the need to provide appropriate relocation options and other sustainable solutions to displacement.

Mainstreaming Ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction and Reconstruction

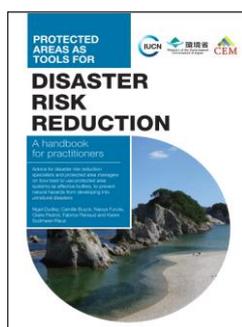
This symposium focused on challenges and prospects in mainstreaming ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction and reconstruction. A publication titled 'Protected Areas as Tools for Disaster Risk Reduction: A Handbook for Practitioners' was launched in the event.

(For details of this side event, please see the back.)

Protected Areas as Tools for Disaster Risk Reduction: A Handbook for Practitioners

This handbook introduces the roles and functions of protected areas such as national parks for DRR. It provides concrete measures and case studies on how to use protected area systems as effective buffers against natural hazards like storms, floods, tidal surges and earthquakes and maximize the ecosystem services that protected areas could provide.

Published by: Ministry of Environment, Japan and IUCN, Gland, Switzerland



GEOC

Global Environment Outreach Centre

Global Environment Outreach Centre (GEOC), a joint programme between the Ministry of the Environment of Japan and UNU, contributes to improving communications and outreach between stakeholders through establishing partnership in order to realize a sustainable society.

The Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction Public Forum Official Side Event

On 14 March 2015, the international symposium titled 'Mainstreaming Ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction and Reconstruction: Lessons Learned from 3/11 for the World and the Future' was held at the third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction's public forum in Sendai, Japan. This symposium was organized by UNU-IAS, the Ministry of the Environment of Japan (MOEJ) and IUCN.

Ecosystems such as coastal forests and wetlands not only support livelihoods through regular ecosystem services, but also decrease disaster risks. This symposium presented the best practices for ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction and reconstruction (Eco-DRR), and discussed how to mainstream Eco-DRR in Japan and internationally.

Opening the symposium, Mr. Yoshio Mochizuki (Minister of the Environment of Japan) and Mrs. Akie Abe (Spouse of the Prime Minister of Japan) reflected on the significance of the role ecosystems play in disaster-prone areas. The Minister stressed the need to maintain ecosystems that can mitigate natural disasters and noted Japan's contribution to this field. Mrs. Abe emphasized Japan's history of coexisting with nature and questioned the effectiveness of constructing huge coastal levees – currently underway in parts of Japan – as a disaster risk reduction (DRR) measure, calling attention to their environmental impacts.



Highlighting the role of ecosystems in strengthening local resilience, Prof. Kazuhiko Takeuchi (Senior Vice-Rector, UNU) introduced ecosystem-based approaches for a resilient society living in harmony with nature. He presented case studies such as the Green Reconstruction Project in Sanriku Fukko National Park and the reconstruction of Kesennuma-Oshima, an island greatly affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011. Ms. Inger Andersen (Director General, IUCN) stated that the post-2015 agenda for DRR should include nature-based solutions, and announced the launch of a joint publication by IUCN and MOEJ titled 'Protected Areas as Tools for Disaster Risk Reduction – A Handbook for Practitioners.'

The symposium also featured best practices of Eco-DRR. Ms. Jane Madgwick (CEO, Wetlands International) presented on practices of DRR through wetland management, which could also bring about other benefits. Mr. Shoichi Shirahata (Chairman, Kesennuma-Oshima Tourism Association) reaffirmed the importance of sustainable reconstruction, sharing experiences from Kesennuma-Oshima where the local community chose to foster disaster-mitigating trees over increasing the height of local seawalls. Ms. Marlynn Mendoza (Chief Ecosystem Management Specialist, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Philippines) and Mr. Christopher Briggs (Executive Secretary, Ramsar Convention) presented on the ability of wetlands to control floods and droughts, underscoring the importance of protecting, managing and restoring these rapidly disappearing ecosystems. On the role of forests in DRR, Mr. Hiroki Katsuragawa (Director, Forest Planning Division, the Forestry Agency of Japan) showcased Japan's forest



rehabilitation and conservation projects as well as the country's erosion control technology.

The panel discussion was moderated by Prof. Shiro Wakui (Acting Chair, UNDB-J Committee / Professor, Tokyo City University). The panellists included Prof. Fumihiko Imamura (Professor, International Research Institute of Disaster Science, Tohoku University), Mr. Masatoshi Sato (Chairman, Keidanren Committee on Nature Conservation), Dr. Satoquo Seino (Associate Professor, Graduate School of Engineering, Kyushu University), Dr. Srikantha Herath (Senior Academic Program Officer, UNU-IAS) and Ms. Radhika Murti (Senior Programme Coordinator, IUCN). These well-versed professionals addressed challenges and prospects for promoting Eco-DRR. Prof. Imamura introduced a study of mangroves in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, which revealed that if the mangroves that had formerly existed in the area had been preserved properly, they could have saved 30,000 people. He emphasized that it is essential to enhance the natural functions of ecosystems by properly integrating DRR measures such as construction of seawalls, raised roads, evacuation facilities and preservation of coastal forests. The discussion called for business investments in natural infrastructure, active involvement of local communities, interdisciplinary education in the field of Eco-DRR, and integration of ecosystem management into local and national disaster risk reduction plans as well as climate change adaptation plans.

Through the presentations from prominent speakers and discussions, the symposium highlighted the benefits and effectiveness of Eco-DRR and its sustainability from social, economic and environmental perspectives. Mainstreaming Eco-DRR contributes to building a resilient and sustainable society. It will be important to further promote recognition of the roles and functions of natural ecosystems in DRR and to strengthen initiatives to implement Eco-DRR.

