



G8 RESPONSE TO THE INDIAN OCEAN DISASTER, AND FUTURE ACTION ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

1. The international response to the shocking tragedy of the Indian Ocean disaster on 26 December was immediate and overwhelming. Latest figures suggest that over US\$9 billion has been donated from across the globe, from both governments and individuals. The focus of affected governments and the international community in the first few months was to provide immediate humanitarian relief such as provision of food, water, medicine and shelter. Paris Club Creditors also agreed to provide exceptional debt relief on eligible sovereign claims from those countries until 31 December 2005. This offer has been taken up by Sri Lanka and Indonesia.
2. The G8 has now considered the longer-term issues in the aftermath of the immediate humanitarian response to the tsunami. Communities and livelihoods now need to be rebuilt, future risks reduced and communities left more resilient to similar events in the future.

Early Warning Systems

3. We support international efforts to improve global early warning capacity as called for by the UN Secretary General. We believe that responsibility for implementation rests with governments and stakeholders at the local, national, and regional levels with support from other partners. And we see a strong role for co-ordination by the UN at the international level, including through the UNESCO/Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) for tsunami early warning systems.
4. We believe that the aim of the international community should be to reduce the vulnerability to the threat of disasters. To this end:
 - Early warning systems should cover as many hazards as possible, not just tsunamis, and they should build on existing systems at national and regional levels, and seek to fill any gaps.
 - We affirm the role of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), where key national and intergovernmental operators of earth observation systems as well as UN agencies, such as the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission participate to ensure a co-ordinated and compatible monitoring capacity that balances the need to gather data on a global scale with the need for rapid and effective dissemination.
5. We also recognise the important role played by the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), UN Development Programme, UN Environment

Programme, UNICEF, Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs, World Food Programme, World Health Organisation, Food and Agriculture Organisation and World Meteorological Organisation. These organisations should recognise that early warning systems need to be multi-hazard and global and they will need to co-ordinate their activities. We welcome the offer by Germany to host the “Third International Conference on Early Warning, EWC III” in Bonn, Germany, in March 2006 under the auspices of the United Nations.

6. We recognise that to be effective, early warning systems for global geophysical events should be:
 - Based on high quality and appropriate scientific advice that can be translated into effective action by policy makers and those most at risk at a local level. We will support closer co-ordination on natural hazard assessment to enable the scientific community to advise decision-takers on potential natural hazards likely to have high global or regional impact, within the existing UN co-ordinated international disaster reduction framework, including ISDR, in co-operation with GEOSS.
 - Supported by the G8, including through strengthening or seeking reform of existing systems and mechanisms and by helping to identify the biggest policy gaps to ensure that technical and local capacity is in place.
 - Engaged with non-governmental stakeholders, like the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, who play a key role at the community level together with local people, to address gaps in the information chain.
 - Fully supported by all countries, with real-time exchange of data from existing seismic networks, such as that of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty Organisation, tide gauges and other early warning systems.
7. Our countries are able to pool experiences of disaster management and of working with disaster prone countries and practical experience with tsunami early warning, which we are able to share where and when necessary, including the provision of interim tsunami advisory information.

Supporting Disaster Risk Reduction

8. Early warning alone will not eradicate the risk of disaster, nor will it reduce the impact of disasters, which have particularly grave implications for the poor and for hard-won development gains. In order to reduce disaster risk, we will work together with the UN, World Bank, other multi-development banks and developing countries to help them tackle disaster risk reduction more effectively. We will also consider how to improve the profile of disaster risk reduction in our development and other ministries.

9. We believe that:

- This could be addressed through better prioritisation of disaster risk reduction in bilateral and multilateral development programmes, and through people-centred response plans to mobilise communities in the face of hazards.
- The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in January 2005 could be an important basis for our work on disaster risk reduction.
- The UN should demonstrate stronger leadership in support of disaster reduction, including a commitment to build a more effective International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. Donors should support this process, including through the allocation of greater and flexible funding. We recognise there could be a possible role for bilateral assistance.
- The ISDR is well placed to act as an advisory mechanism on disaster risk reduction, emphasising the need for dissemination of best practices in areas such as education and outreach and appropriate building codes and zoning.

Improving the Humanitarian System

10. The magnitude of the impact of the tsunami demonstrated the importance of having an effective and efficient international humanitarian system, that is capable of responding in a timely and appropriate manner to crises. We take this opportunity to underscore the critical importance we attach to strengthening the humanitarian system, and to the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence of humanitarian assistance.
11. We support efforts to improve the co-ordination and the timeliness of humanitarian response. We recognise the strong leadership of the Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in providing effective disaster assistance in the wake of the Tsunami disaster. The G8 will seek to strengthen OCHA and UN Humanitarian and Resident Co-ordinators, and will support the co-ordination and prioritisation of the allocation of funding to where it is most needed. However, we recognise that some donors may also wish to allocate funds bilaterally.
12. We are willing to explore initiatives to strengthen the UN coordination role and its ability to react more rapidly and efficiently in the face of emergencies, including through enhanced access to the necessary resources and capabilities such as personnel, logistics, transportation and means of adequately distributing assistance, provided at the request of the UN by individual UN member states.
13. We welcome the intention of some donors to explore the scope for enhancing existing multilateral funding mechanisms, such as the UN Central Emergency

Revolving Fund and note the role of the UN General Assembly in this regard. The idea of making larger grant-making funds that could be used for rapid response, forgotten crises and strengthening agency preparedness could have value and should be discussed further. Some donors will wish to provide financial support for the Humanitarian Co-ordinators to disburse at country-level.