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UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

Responding to the UN Secretary-General's Call to Action: Realizing Early Warning Systems for All in a World with Increasing Water Related Hazards

Thursday 23 March, 8:00-9:15 a.m., CR2, UNHQ

Co-organized by: World Meteorological Organization (WMO), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) in collaboration with the Governments of Egypt, Tajikistan, Japan, United States, with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Background on the event

The United Nations Secretary General announced on 23 March 2022, World Meteorological Day, a new call to action to ensure every person on Earth is protected by Multihazard Early Warning Systems (MHEWS) within five years. The call to action, Early Warnings for All, aims to develop a global system to enhance knowledge on risks, impacts, consequences and available response options, as well as to develop capacities to anticipate and manage disaster risks across scales. Early Warnings for All has to be a key priority, in particular for floods, droughts and other water-related hazards, including glaciers melting, in disaster risk reduction strategies and to protect the attainment for the Sustainable Development Goals. As a response, UN Member States and entities together with intergovernmental and stakeholder organizations and the private sector have made transformative commitments and created cross-sectoral partnerships that will change the game on how we prepare for and reduce the impacts of climate change and disasters and build resilience.

Water Action Agenda

Following commitments made during the event are direct contributions to the Water Action Agenda and support implementation of the Early Warnings for All: Executive Action Plan 2023-2027 and SDG 6:

- [Better global water information through the Global Hydrological Status and Outlook System \(HydroSOS\) & Reporting](#)
- [Enhancing earth system observations, monitoring and forecasting for floods and droughts to ensure early warnings for all](#)
- [Water at the Heart of Climate Action partnership](#)
- [Action for Water Adaptation and Resilience \(AWARe\)](#)

Key Issues discussed

- The impacts of anthropogenic climate change are being seen and felt around the world, and water-related hazards are key in that respect: floods and droughts struck approximately 75% of all people impacted by hazards in 2000-2019 and the related damage amounts to trillions USD.
- Less than half of all countries in the world have reported the existence of an operational Multihazard Early Warning Systems (MHEWS), with low coverage in climate vulnerable countries, especially in Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and in Africa. Even where warning elements exist, implementation must be scaled up to save lives and protect livelihoods.
- Multi-hazard Early Warning Systems and other disaster risk reduction activities are proven, effective, and feasible measures to reduce related impacts and save lives.
- Climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction measures, and sustainable water management can significantly reduce disasters and their impacts and support sustainable development, including Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6), in all its dimensions.

Key recommendations for action

- Early Warnings for All has to be a key priority, in particular for floods, droughts and other water-related hazards, including glaciers melting, in disaster risk reduction strategies and for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Multi-hazard Early Warning Systems must be people-centered and incorporate a whole-of-society approach.
- Investments need to be made for all components of the Early Warnings for All pillars, including to fill the capacity gap in collecting data, assessing the hydrological status, making predictions at the short-term (floods) and season to sub-seasonal (droughts) time scales, understanding risk, disseminating and communicating risk information, and supporting preparedness and response strategies, policies, and plans.
- Decision makers need to have reliable information to ensure early action to protect people and economies from water-related hazards at local, national to regional levels.
- Coordinated local community and national anticipatory and early action plans with pre-arranged and reliable funding attached can support timely preparedness and response actions, including for those in the hardest to reach places.