

Messages from the Symposium at Beppu, Japan on: “Integrated Approach to Water-Related Disaster Management”

Conveners: River Bureau, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MLIT), Japan, and
International Centre for Water Hazard and Risk Management (ICHARM)
Date & Venue: 2 Dec. 2007 from 13:00 to 18:00 Hours
Beppu city Social Welfare Hall

High-level guests from international organizations, academic experts and government officers convened and extensively discussed on the water-related disaster management. The main focus was the anticipated Climate Change. It was agreed that adaptation was as important as mitigation in response to the implications of Climate Change and elaborated on flexible adaptive measures to realize an integrated approach towards water-related disaster management including coping with Climate Change. Water-related Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is the main means of adaptation to Climate Change, which is urgent and necessary. Based on the discussion, the following messages are adopted for consideration by the participants of the 1st Asia-Pacific Water Summit.

Key Messages

1. In the Asia-Pacific region, even under current geographical, meteorological and socio-economic conditions, the level of Water-related DRR Management is far from sufficient and many vulnerability factors are ever-increasing. As reported by the IPCC, it is now evident that the risks resulting from Climate Change may cause extra burdens such as extreme precipitation and tropical cyclones, more frequent droughts, enlarged risks from storm surges. Countries need to create an enabling environment and empower people, communities and local governments including sharing knowledge, resources and information, raising awareness and ensuring participation in the policy/decision-making processes to cope with threats from Climate Change.
2. Each country should effectively combine both structural and non-structural measures, depending on its specific conditions to reduce the risks from water-related disasters, thus contributing to the promotion of water-related DRR to protect people, property and well-being. While non-structural measures should be more effectively adopted, structural measures will continue to play an important role to improve the protection level from expected risks, for which resources need to be ensured for steady implementation of necessary measures. It is imperative to complement national allocations by focused investments from development banks and development assistance, including ODA.
3. From the viewpoint of protecting human lives, it is necessary to circumvent risks by ensuring timely and smooth evacuation at the time of disasters as well as disaster restoration, which will be provided by measures such as hazard maps and early warning systems. Furthermore, adaptive measures should be taken in a socially acceptable manner, and with sustainable development perspectives in mind. For this purpose, governments should continue to bear the overall responsibility on nation-wide policy planning, resources mobilization and implementation in cooperation with local governments, communities and relevant agencies. As agreed by the Ministers during the “Ministers’ Forum on Asia-Pacific Infrastructure Development” on 30 August, 2007 in Beijing, water-related DRR needs to be realized within the context of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) which includes proper management of excessive as well as scarce water. Integration needs to reflect various social, economic and cultural situations in the region, recognizing the importance of internationally adopted frameworks such as Millennium Development Goals and Hyogo Framework for Actions.
4. Water-related DRR needs to be incorporated, with the highest priority, into national development plans with clear goals/targets. Efforts need to be made to establish a standardized procedure for disaster preparedness to monitor and better manage water-related disasters.
5. Quantitative effects of Climate Change on hydro-meteorological conditions should be carefully gathered to formulate adaptive strategies thus enabling actions be taken efficiently on time. The Asia-Pacific countries should share experiences, methodologies, technologies and resources and synergize to comprehensively and properly promote water-related disaster management where willingness for contribution was expressed by Japan, ADB and many others. It is also important to create a knowledge sharing platform (knowledge hub) and to endeavor to foster expertise and enhance institutional capacities based on local needs. The scope of this platform should include scientific research, data acquisition and processing and enhancement of monitoring and assessment capabilities.