Committee Guide

Assisting Nations suffering from Aftermath of Natural Disasters

Special Conference

OLMUN 2018
18th International Session

Table of Contents

1. Personal Introduction

1.1. Meret Weber

Dear delegates, welcome to the Special Conference!
My name is Meret Weber, I am 16 years old and currently in 11th grade at the Nelson Mandela School in Berlin. Along with Dominik, I will be chairing this 2018 SpC. Growing up in a multilingual, political and international family and environment, I have always been interested in politics and international relations, which is why I decided to join my school's MUN group in 2016. Since then, I have attended 7 conferences as delegate as well as conference manager. In my free time, I am actively involved in the Green youth party and enjoy writing, dancing and travelling. I am very much looking forward to meeting all of you and hope that we will have an interesting, productive conference!

Yours sincerely
Meret Weber

1.2. Emma Beelen

Dear delegates of the Special Conference,

It is a great pleasure for me to be chairing the Special Conference this year. MUNs, especially OLMUN, have been a considerable part of my life for a while. After joining OMUN in 2012, I was a member of the Inner Circle for several years and served as President of the General Assembly in 2015. Currently, I am completing my bachelor's degree in International Relations at the University of Geneva.MUNs are still a passion of mine and thus I am thrilled to come back to OLMUN as a chair! I am always amazed to see the brilliant ideas that young people come up with to solve the issues under discussion. Indeed, in my view, MUNs are a key element of political education, as they present us with a wonderful opportunity to explore internationally relevant topics in a unique setting.I hope that you are looking forward to OLMUN 2018 as much as we all are and that you will benefit from this opportunity to learn about urgent political issues, to strengthen your skills and to make new friends from all over the world. We certainly cannot wait to meet all of you and to hear your proposals on our topic!

If you have any questions, we will be happy to help, so don't hesitate to write us a message. See you soon!

Emma Beelen

2. General Information

Dear delegates,
We feel honoured to welcome you to the United Nations Special Conference. We hope that this guide will give you a practical overview on our topic 'Assisting Nations Suffering from the Aftermath of Natural Disasters' and a first impression of how to prepare for the debate. First, we would like to share some organizational matters with you.
For some of you, this will be the first MUN conference, therefore we strongly advise you to read the official Handbook and the Rules of Procedure of OLMUN 2018 carefully. Not only do these documents contain helpful information on how to write a policy statement or a draft resolution, they also provide you with vital information about the procedure at OLMUN 2018. Since there may be striking differences to other MUN conferences regarding certain motions or the debate format we also recommend the experienced delegates to read the Rules of Procedure. However, studying the Handbook and the Rules of Procedure in advance will make your stay in our committee much more pleasant and will give you the assurance to participate actively from the beginning.
Apart from this procedural aspect, we also kindly ask you to conduct research regarding the topic at hand and your country. This Committee Guide will not (!) prepare you sufficiently enough for the conference. Instead, it shall give you some introductory hints and advice in regard to our topic. In consequence, it will not replace your own research which is therefore recommended. The position of your country towards a certain political issue is called the 'policy' of your country. One of the most important things to bear in mind when taking part in MUNs is to stick to your country´s policy, not to your own opinion. Remember: the more realistic our debate is, the more fun all of us will have! In order to outline your country's policy, we would like to give you two tasks for the time before the conference. Every delegate is required to hand in a policy statement until the 6th of June. Once you hand them in we will give you a short feedback on it. Assignments handed in after this deadline will not be considered as handed in. Please note that respective delegates will be not eligible for any potential awards. If you want to receive feedback on your draft resolution, feel free to hand them in as well.
Now it is up to you: A good session is highly dependent on your preparation. The better you prepare, the better our simulation will be. For further information, please visit our website (www.olmun.org). Important information, e. g. the Conference Schedule or the Rules of Procedure, will be uploaded there. If you have any questions regarding the preparation or the conference don't hesitate to contact us (spc@olmun.org). We are really looking forward to meeting all of you in June and to experience one of the best student MUNs in Germany!
See you soon,
Meret and Emma

3. About the Special Conference

The Special Conference, as its name may already suggest, has a special role in Model United Nations. Unlike the regular committees like the General Assembly's First Committee or the Economic and Social Council, the Special Conference is not bound to a certain field of action. The Special Conference deals with important and urgent matters which require the attention of the United Nations. For example, a few of the topics discussed during the last years were the freedom of speech in post conflict zones or the fight against piracy and maritime terrorism. This year's Special Conference will consist of approximately 60 delegates, many of them from nations in a risk area for natural disasters.

4. Natural Disasters

As stated by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), a disaster can be defined as "a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope with using its own resources." To understand not only why Natural Disasters are an important issue but also how the United Nations can contribute to helping people affected by them, a basic understanding of Natural Disasters in general is necessary. Therefore, we will introduce you to the most important types of Natural Disasters and what kind of challenges have to be expected in the aftermath of theses catastrophes. Please keep in mind, that there are other forms of natural disasters with slightly different aftermaths, you might want to take into consideration for your draft resolution.

4.1. Different Kinds of Natural Disasters

4.1.1. Floods

A flood occurs when water overflows land that is normally dry. Most common are rivers or streams overflowing their banks. Excessive rain, a ruptured dam or levee, rapid ice melting in the mountains, or even an unfortunately placed beaver dam can overwhelm a river and send it spreading over the adjacent land, called a floodplain. Coastal flooding occurs when a large storm or tsunami causes the sea to surge inland. In most cases, a flood takes hours or even days to develop, giving residents sufficient time to prepare or evacuate. But there are also floods that generate quickly and with little warning. These flash floods can be extremely dangerous, instantly turning a small brook into a rapid stream.
When a river overflows its banks or the sea drives inland, structures poorly equipped to withstand the water's strength are no match. Bridges, houses, trees, and cars can be picked up and carried off. The erosive force of moving water can drag dirt from under a building's foundation, causing it to crack and tumble. When floodwaters recede, affected areas are often blanketed in silt and mud. The water and landscape can be contaminated with hazardous materials, such as sharp debris, pesticides, fuel, and untreated sewage. Potentially

dangerous mould blooms can quickly overwhelm water-soaked structures. Residents of flooded areas can be left without power and clean drinking water, leading to outbreaks of deadly waterborne diseases like typhoid, hepatitis A, and cholera.

4.1.2. Earthquakes

An earthquake is any sudden shaking of the ground caused by the passage of seismic waves through Earth's rocks. Earthquakes occur most often along geologic faults, narrow zones where rock masses move in relation to one another. The major fault lines of the world are located at the fringes of the huge tectonic plates that make up Earth's crust.
Annually, about 50,000 earthquakes are large enough to be noticed without the aid of instruments. Of these, approximately 100 are of sufficient size to produce substantial damage if their centres are near areas of habitation. Very great earthquakes occur on average about once per year. Over the centuries they have been responsible for millions of deaths and an incalculable amount of damage to property. These large earthquakes can produce multiple dangerous hazards for the population. Not only collapsing buildings but also following landslides or tsunamis are a major threat.

4.1.3. Droughts

Drought is an insidious hazard of nature and its impacts vary from region to region. It is difficult to define, because what may be considered a drought in, Bali (six days without rain) would certainly not be considered a drought in Libya (annual rainfall less than 180 mm). In the most general sense, drought originates from a deficiency of precipitation over an extended period of time--usually a season or more--resulting in a water shortage for some activity, group, or environmental sector.
Long-lasting droughts can have fatal impacts on the environment as well as on the economy and the people. Farmers often face the destruction of their livelihood, when a drought destroys their crops. Additionally, food and water can get extremely expensive and therefore destabilize the whole economy. But droughts have an impact on the environment too, and sometimes it can last a long time: destruction of fish and wildlife habitat, loss of wetlands, an increased danger of wildfires, wind and water erosion of soils.

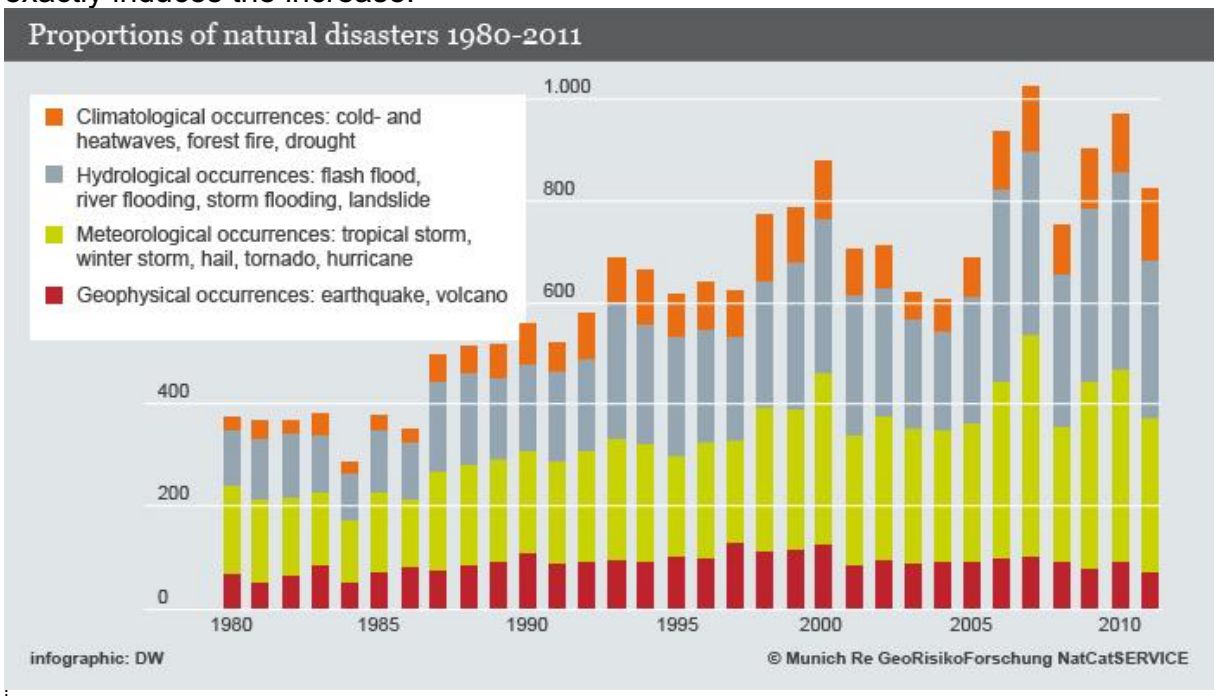
4.1.4. Storms

A storm is a violent atmospheric disturbance, characterized by low barometric pressure, cloud cover, precipitation, strong winds, and possibly lightning and thunder. In meteorological terminology storm is restricted to a cyclone with a strong low-pressure centre, strong winds, ranging from 103–117 kilometres per hour, accompanied by heavy precipitation, and at times, lightning and thunder. One of the most intense and dangerous forms of a storm is the tropical cyclone, also referred to as typhoon or hurricane.
High winds cause some of the most dramatic and damaging effects associated with tropical cyclones. In the most intense tropical cyclones, sustained winds

may be as high as 240 km per hour, and gusts can exceed 320 km per hour. In that time, not only trees or overhead rails, but even the most solidly constructed buildings may begin to suffer damage. In coastal regions an elevation of sea level—the storm surge—is often the deadliest phenomenon associated with tropical cyclones. A storm surge accompanying an intense tropical cyclone can be as high as 6 metres. Tropical cyclones typically bring large amounts of water into the areas they affect. It is not uncommon for totals of 500 to 1,000 mm of rain to be reported over some regions. Rainfall rates such as these may overwhelm the capacity of storm drains, resulting in local flooding. Flooding may be particularly severe in low-lying regions such as in Bangladesh and the Gulf Coast of the United States. It is also a problem in areas where mountains and canyons concentrate the rainfall.

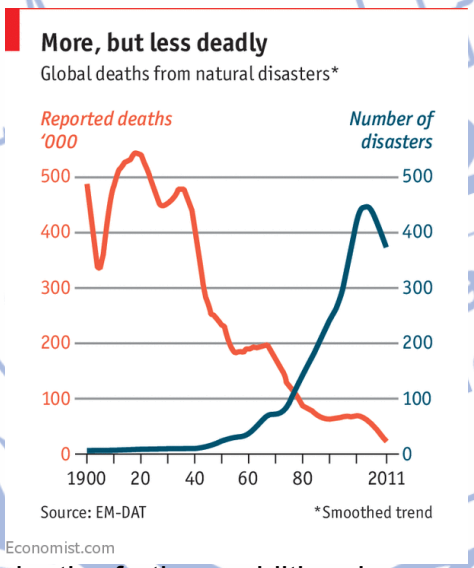
4.2. Recent developments

Over the last decades, the number of natural disasters per year is rising (see figure below). To understand how to react properly to this effect, it is necessary to understand the causes of those natural disasters and what exactly induces the increase.



i

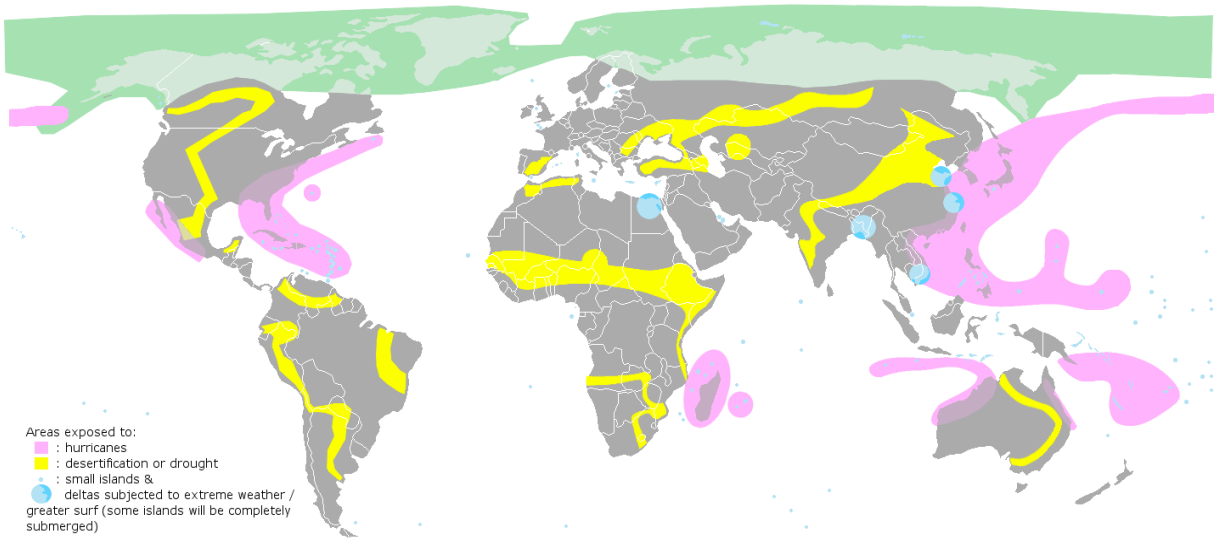
Apart from geophysical occurrences, there is an increase in all other categories of natural disasters since the 1980s. Whereas human actions don't have an impact on the number or intensity of earthquakes or volcanic outbursts, all other categories of natural disasters can be affected by the climate or the weather. This leads to the conclusion that over the last 30 years climatic conditions have changed and therefore the probability of natural disasters is growing.



[ii] Although the number of such disasters keeps rising, far fewer people are dying as a result of them. In 1970, 200,000 people perished annually. That figure has been dramatically reduced, thanks to safety measures such as improved buildings and flood-prevention schemes. But this statistic is tempered by the fact that more people are being injured, displaced or left homeless. Because, with the number of disasters increasing, more people are affected and in need of help. If these people do not receive the necessary help fast, the number of reported deaths will be likely to increase again. However, to reduce the number of deaths further, additional measures are necessary, both to make livelihoods more secure in the first place and to assist people dealing with the aftermath of a catastrophe.

The majority of scientists believe the increase in hydro-meteorological disasters is due to a combination of natural and human-made factors. Global warming is increasing the temperatures of the Earth's oceans and atmosphere, leading to more intense storms of all types, including tropical cyclones.

Some scientists theorize that a growth in population plays a large part in natural disasters. According to these experts, disasters are not just necessarily increasing, but our methods of tracking them are improving. With the ability to keep record of these disasters, scientists notice them more frequently than in the past. Limited means of keeping track of the natural disasters meant that the average could not be compared to previous accounts.



[iii]

Through increasing population, more people are affected, even with minor storms. Generally, tropical vacation areas are hot spots for climate related catastrophes, especially floods and storms. As shown in the map above,

especially the Caribbean and the east coast of the United States as well as South East Asia and Japan are exposed to tropical cyclones. The south East Asian population is particularly endangered, due to many big cities located in the coastal area. With hundreds to thousands of individuals clustered in one region, storms can wipe out more surface area in a shorter period of time. Natural variations in the frequency and intensity of tropical storms are also believed to be a contributing factor, as are large-scale temperature fluctuations in the tropical waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean, known as El Niño and La Niña.
Furthermore, people are tempting nature with rapid and unplanned urbanization in flood-prone regions, increasing the likelihood that their towns and villages will be affected by flash floods and coastal floods. More and more land areas are covered by cement which means the water cannot get absorbed by the soil anymore. As a result, more water keeps rushing down and floods are bigger.
Corresponding with the World Bank's "Natural Disaster Hotspots: A Global Risk Analysis" reports show that over 160 countries hold more than one-fourth of their populations in regions of high mortality risks from one or more natural disasters. Taiwan was singled out as being the place on Earth most vulnerable to natural disasters, with 73 percent of its land and population exposed to three or more threats.
Klaus Jacob, a senior research scientist at Columbia University pointed out: 'As you put more and more people in harm's way, you make a disaster out of something that before was just a natural event'. Besides the effects of the climate change, this might be another important influence thriving the increase in natural disasters.

4.3. Previous measures taken

4.3.1. Humanitarian and Financial Aid

International disaster aid commonly consists of either financial or material aid (nutritional and hygienic supplies, shelter material, etc.) For the former, one distinguishes between two separate categories: Official Development Assistance (ODA) and Humanitarian Assistance (or emergency aid). ODA is the international aid given to developing countries with the aim of promoting economic development, eliminating poverty and ensuring long term stability. The recipients of this aid are decided on by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), ranked depending on GDP, geographical location and socioeconomic situation of the country. ODA funding is invested in long term programs and projects and in regard to natural disasters, it is mostly related to disaster risk management and reduction.
Emergency Aid is a very different form of relief, as it relies purely on rapid donor response and relief. Such assistance is provided mainly to so-called rapid onset emergencies, i.e. natural disasters that are short-lived, but nevertheless create a high number of affected individuals as well as a high death toll. In theory, this aid is provided unconditionally, meaning that donor parties will provide aid regardless of political considerations, but instead based on purely ethical, humanitarian principles.

In order to understand the UN's role in emergency aid, one must firstly identify the main actors. Donor activity is usually distinguished between private actors and governments. In 2016, there was a total of US $27.3 billion spent on humanitarian assistance - $20.3 billion of this sum were provided by governments and EU institutions[1]. Evidently, the world's strongest economic powers are also the man donors. However, as countries cannot simply send money to the affected governments, UN organisations (as well as international NGOs) act as aid funds and facilitators, connecting the financial flow with the actual requirements of countries/regions affected by natural disasters.
The most relevant and active UN agencies in humanitarian assistance are the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Each with respective focuses, they are involved in prevention, immediate relief and long-term assistance with the aftermath of natural disasters.

4.3.2. Current UN Actions

Facing an ever-increasing rate of natural disasters due to climate change, political instability and overpopulation, the United Nations are continuously developing mechanisms and programs to prevent natural disasters and reduce their impact. As signified clearly by the Sendai Framework[2], UN action has shifted from a responsive focus, i.e. investing mainly into emergency aid and reconstruction, to an anticipatory perspective, choosing to refocus on disaster risk reduction and preparedness. Last configured at the COP23 conference in Bonn 2017, the UN aims to reduce vulnerability and enhance resilience by integrating climate change adaptation with the Sendai Framework and the Sustainable Development Goals[3]. While this new focus may not directly influence assistance provided in the aftermath of disasters, disaster management frameworks ensure a reduction of damages and losses, thereby reducing the need for humanitarian assistance in the long term and increasing all nations' resilience to disasters.

4.4. Weaknesses of Current Response Mechanisms

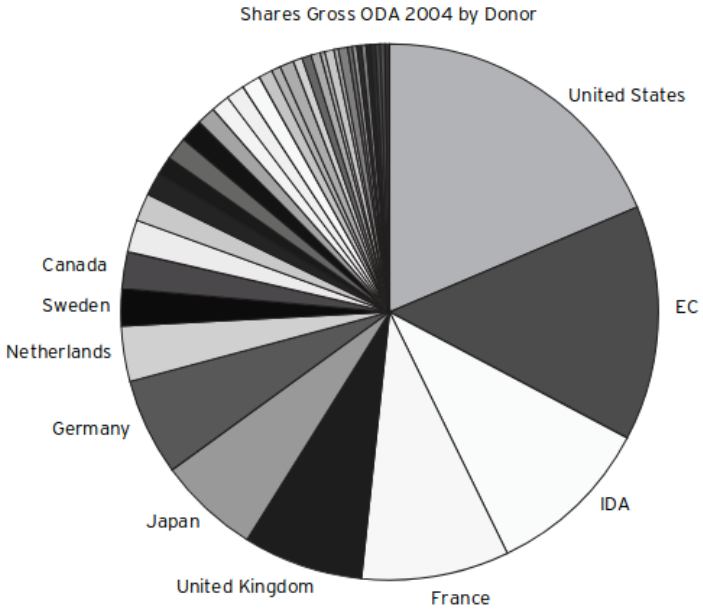
4.4.1. Donor Behaviour

While the theory of emergency relief is based on neutral, unconditional principals, studies show clearly that there is an inherent bias in the donation behaviour of the top donor nations. Firstly, there is a disproportionally higher amount of aid provided to so called "big emergencies", disasters that affect internationally 'important' areas or occur in geographically unsuspected areas. Other, more 'common' emergencies, such as recurring flood disasters in South-East Asia, are provided with less and less means, regardless of the death toll or number of affected individuals. Secondly, the aid provided by the top five donors within the last 25 years follows a distinct pattern which prioritises certain states over others. "On average, donor governments provide significantly more aid to oil exporting countries and give disproportionally more to geographically closer and politically less affine countries, as well as to former colonies." [4] A nation exporting oil increases the probability of receiving large sums of financial aid by up to 15%[4] and with every 1000km of distance between the donor

country and the affected nation, the tendency to provide aid is reduced by up to 2%.
Donor nations may justify these patterns by, for example, expressing an increased responsibility for the stability and prosperity of former colonies or by stating the logistical disadvantage posed by providing humanitarian aid to geographically remote nations. Nevertheless, the existence of such patterns is a defiance of the original principles of aid, creating inequality and, consequently, a weakness in current aid mechanisms.

4.4.2. Coordination, Communication and Cooperation

Another central weakness posed by current international response to aid in the aftermath of disasters is the absence of coordination, communication and cooperation between governments, private actors and UN agencies. There are hundreds of aid agencies and state actors working simultaneously but without any interaction (see graph below[6]). Currently, all sectors provide aid independently of each other, creating a disproportionate surplus of funds for certain emergencies and a worryingly low amount for others. While global tracking mechanisms for disasters and relief exist [5], they are administered by third parties, without creating any interaction between these sectors. Additionally, there is an extreme lack of comprehensive data collection, as most mechanisms currently in place function on a voluntary basis and can rarely be verified.



5. Potential Solutions/ Improvements

5.1. UN Agencies

Within the field of emergency assistance and disaster managements, there are many proposals as to how the international community and, more relevantly, the United Nations can improve their response mechanisms and programmes. Observing best and worst practices of aid agencies in recent years [6], UN agencies rank the lowest when considered in terms of five central aspects.

Consequently, these aspects should be the central focus of improving assistance mechanisms. Firstly, the transparency of agency activity must be improved, and data of incoming and outgoing funds should be publicly shared. Secondly, agencies with specializations (regional focus, type of disaster, etc.) can function more efficiently and generate more expertise of prevention mechanisms. Thirdly, government and UN agencies need to develop frameworks or policies regarding selectivity, ensuring that funds and aid reach those affected and are not lost in corruption or misadministration. The fourth aspect is the effectivity of aid channels, so ensuring maximum efficiency of the flow from donor to recipient. Finally, overhead costs - internal wages, organisational fees, etc. - can generally be reduced in all aid agencies.

5.2. General

As with the majority of issues that affect the entire global community, assisting nations suffering the aftermath of natural disasters can not be done through one singular action. Instead, a multifaceted, international approach is need - one that takes into consideration previous mechanisms, their weaknesses and problems that may be faced in the future. Finding a balance between immediate emergency response, long term investments and risk reduction as well as manoeuvring through the vastly diverse group of aid agencies to create more centralised, efficient and interconnected response mechanisms is the issue we face in this Special Conference.

6. Helpful Resources

6.1. UN Documents and Resolutions

6.1.1. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (A/RES/69/283) Adopted at the Third UN World Conference on March 18, 2015 at the request of the UN General Assembly, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 is the successive document to the Hyogo Framework 2000-2015. Focusing on resilience and disaster risk reduction in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, it identifies four priorities with respective goals to be achieved by 2030. The framework's essential goal is to prevent and reduce existing disaster risk through the implementation of measures that reduce vulnerability, increase preparedness, and strengthen resilience.

6.1.2. Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations (A/RES/46/182) This resolution passed at the 78th General Assembly Plenary Meeting in 1991 provides the outline for contemporary humanitarian emergency assistance and the guiding principles of UN humanitarian action. One central agreement

stated is that assistance is to always be provided in accordance with human, neutral and impartial principles.

6.2. Data and Analysis

6.2.1. Foreign Aid in the Aftermath of Large Natural Disasters

Published in 2012 by the Inter-American Development Bank, this paper examines official development assistance in the aftermath of large natural disasters between 1970 and 2008.

6.2.2. EM-DAT: The International Disaster Database

Administered by the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), this global database on natural and technological disasters contains essential data on the occurrence and effects of more than 21,000 disasters in the world, from 1900 to the present.

6.3. Relevant International Organizations and UN Bodies

6.3.1. UN-SPIDER

Administered by the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, this database for space-based information for disaster management and emergency response provides data resources regarding risk and emergency management. Additionally, applied emergency mechanisms and systems, such as the Copernicus system, can be found here.

6.3.2. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

The IFRC is the biggest international emergency response organisation, thus playing an immense role in immediate international assistance. The non-governmental organization works with local red cross and red crescent communities to educate and aid in disaster preparedness as well as coordinate immediate humanitarian aid.

6.3.3. Médecins Sans Frontiers

The Doctors Without Borders Network provides immediate humanitarian and medical relief to areas affected by conflict and natural disasters. They specialize in rapid response, maintaining an international network that is expertly connected and available.

7. Sources

1) Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2017 *devinit.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/GHA-Report-2017-Full-report.pdf* accessed: 28 March 2018

2) Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 *www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/69/283&Lang=E* accessed: March 20 2018

3) Opportunities and options for integrating climate change adaptation with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 *cop23.unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/techpaper_adaptation.pdf* accessed: March 21 2018

4) Determinants of International Emergency Aid *documents.worldbank.org/curated/pt/949201468163753597/pdf/WPS4839.pdf* accessed: March 29 2018

5) EM-DAT: The International Disaster Database *www.emdat.be* accessed: March 28 2018

5) UN Financial Tracking System *fts.unocha.org/* accessed: March 28 2018

6) Where Does the Money Go? Best and Worst Practices in Foreign Aid *www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/06_foreign_aid_easterly.pdf* accessed: March 29 2018

[i]Chart p.7: http://www.dw.com/en/disaster-data-suggests-climate-signal/a-15854430
[ii]Chart p. 7: https://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2017/08/daily-chart-19
[iii]Map p. 8:
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Natural_disasters_caused_by_climate_change.png