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Mr. Kevin Lyonette is Director of Conservation Policy at the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF International). Formerly Head of Fundraising for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr Lyonette also served UNHCR in Cyprus, Argentina and Pakistan

Previously, he was a member of the British Diplomatic Service, and was stationed in London, Rio de Janeiro and New Delhi. He also was visiting Lecturer, Latin America Studies at the University of Bristol, UK.

Mr. Lyonette conducted postgraduate studies in political economics at the University of California, Berkeley, USA and Harvard University, USA, where he was a Visiting Fellow.

With experience in disaster management and sustainable development, Mr. Lyonette assumed the role of commentator for the Main Committee Session.

Commentary

I recall that, at the very beginning of the meeting, the Chairman said that this was quite an exceptional meeting, bringing together different elements of society to look at a very common and urgent problem. I think that has been very much reflected in the discussions of that morning - the richness of the experience, the richness of views and the openness that has come from the panellists frankly makes it extremely difficult for me to try to do justice to exactly what they produced. However, I do feel that there are certain common lines which have come out almost explicitly from the discussion. I would like to propose to you four particular categories of commonality and conclusion.

- My first would be that — whether it was government talking, whether it was NGOs, or whether it was business — the view is that emergency management is not a stand-alone, isolated, science, function or discipline. It is part of the sustainable development cycle. Investment in sustainable development including disaster prevention is very cost-effective for everyone, as was made clear by His Royal Highness the Crown Prince of Japan in the opening ceremony of the conference.

- Point two: no one group involved in disaster management has all the answers. There are no universal recipes. Where we must begin, and this point I think, came through very strongly indeed, is that solutions must be specific to local characteristics, cultures and needs. That has a very great bearing on what I would call the north-south relationships in disaster management. The solutions must be locally specific.

- Point three: there is a need and a space for everyone. Not simply for the scientists, not simply for the NGOs, the governments, the politicians, the administrators. There is a need and there is space for everyone, so come on board.

There is a need for partnerships that integrate and maximize all the relevant skill and capacity in a framework of concept, knowledge and action which is mutually supporting.

As commentator for the session, Mr. Lyonette brought together the common messages of the panellists and the audience. By analyzing the suggestions offered by NGOs, government and business, he sketches a framework for partnership that links emergency management to sustainable development, and highlights comparative advantages of each partner.

■ Sustainable development: best form of disaster prevention

The concept of sustainable development you have seen in your papers this morning has come through from each of the sectors represented here. The concept can be defined. Sustainable development is improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity — or you may, if you are an economist, prefer to call it productivity — of nature. The purpose of development is the quality of human life. It is not necessarily economic growth per se. In that sense, sustainable development and disaster management come together with three inter-dependent components. The pursuit of the quality of human life which refers to the questions of culture, social relationships, social networking that have come through so strongly this morning. The Deputy Minister from Afghanistan talked about the imperative that development must be ecologically responsible and sustainable. If it isn't, we run an enormous risk of simply creating a cycle of disasters and calling them development.

The third factor is the scientific, the technological and the economic. In that kind of concept, sustainable development is the best form of disaster prevention. Let's be quite clear about that. Similarly, disaster mitigation and relief are the first steps back towards recovery in the sustainable development cycle. That's the integrated concept.

We heard a lot during the session about knowledge. There is a tremendous amount of knowledge available. There is a lot of it which is very relevant which we may not take into account. Obviously, science, research, technology have an enormous amount of highly relevant, highly useful, specific knowledge to offer. But I think a conclusion that came out that morning is that the sociologist, the anthropologist, the economist, the health expert, the education expert have a very definite, almost decisive, role to play in sustainable development and disaster management. Moreover, environmental knowledge which is becoming increasingly available — biology, climatology, land use, pollution, water, air — all these sciences and knowledges are

equally relevant to what we are talking about here. If we can bring that sharing, that action, that integration together, the integrated action that would follow would, I believe, provide the most effective form of planning and action in disaster management and in the pursuit of sustainable development.

■ Comparative advantages for each sector

- My fourth point: I would like to just summarize very briefly what I would call the opportunities and the comparative advantages of the major players that were identified. The major players are particularly on a national level because one of our basic principles ought to be to optimize comparative advantages and avoid duplication — avoid duplication of resources whether they are human, temporal or financial.

I think it has come through clearly that, as far as governments are concerned, they should and can establish their own planning and management structure for disaster

management at the national level, with a view to linkages both to the international and to the local levels. Governments are being urged to set high standards, best practice standards, and quality criteria. Governments should also develop their own national resources first, before calling on others. Perhaps above all, governments must establish clear roles and

responsibilities for themselves and their partners. This may need national legislation — let government go ahead and do it since that is its comparative advantage. Governments must also educate the public. That came through very, very strongly indeed. Governments must establish policies which are clear, consistent, long-term, integrated and sustainable. Governments can't change their minds every month.

As far as the private sector is concerned, it's quite obvious that the private sector is an important source of technical knowledge, financial input and support of the sustainable development approach, integrating resources

***Parachuting in short-term
expatriates to produce a master
plan is just about the biggest waste
of money that any government,
NGOs and the UN
system commit today.***