FRANCE

The prevention of natural disasters in France was promoted with a series of events held over a period of months in 1998.

Seminar: "10 Years After, From Memory to Risk Management"

On 14 October 1998, the observance of the National Day for Major Risks focused on the commemoration of the worst floods which the city had experienced on 3 October 1988. The seminar was organised by the city of Nîmes, the French Minister for Land Use Planning and Environment, regional authorities such as the Regional Direction for Environment, the General Council of Gard, the French Institute for Urban Risks Prevention and Management, the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), the fire brigade and the Hospital of Nîmes.

Participants discussed various aspects of risk reduction, in particular for water-related risks, the role of insurance, emergency city plans, financial constraints, the needs of local communities at risk and information/communication policies for disaster reduction.

Speakers included local and national authorities in charge of risk management, experts and journalists.

Second European Conference on Risk Prevention

From 14 to 16 October, the Second European Conference on Risk Prevention took place in Niort, a city in France which is the cradle of the largest mutual insurance companies. Some 800 participants from 23 countries world-wide attended the conference, which was organised by the European Centre on Risk Prevention, an organisation created in 1997 at the initiative of the insurance companies based in Niort.

The meeting took place under the auspices of the IDNDR with the support of the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, the European Commission and the French Ministry for Land Use Planning and Environment. It was organised in conjunction with the Council of Europe FORM-OSE Seminar attended by representatives of 27 European universities. A member of the IDNDR Scientific and Technical Committee participated in the meeting.



Discussions were held on floods and seismic risks, preventive disaster reduction measures including risk zonation, land use planning, the culture of risk and vulnerability, information, education and training for risk reduction, and the involvement of local communities at risk.

The European Centre on Risk Prevention will hold its next conference in October 2000 on the theme "Seniors and Risk Prevention". World Fire Day will be observed on October 2000.

In 1998 also, the French Ministry of Land Use Planning and Environment developed a card game "Be a Natural Risk Manager" adapted from a tarot game. It showed the various risks related to natural elements, such as fire, water, air and the earth and the various prevention stages. The card game was distributed to French schools and during the Mayors' Fair which took place in Paris in November 1998.

The following events took place in October 1998:

- CEMAGREF and Natural Risk, Grenoble, 8 October.
- Day of Information and Welcome to the Public, Lille, 14 October.
- The Floods: role playing with 15 children, Avignon, 14 October.

GERMANY

The important International IDNDR Conference on Early Warning Systems for the Reduction of Natural Disasters was held at the GeoForschungsZentrum in Potsdam, Germany from the 7-11 September 1998. The meeting brought together 370 scientists, public officials, and representatives of the United Nations system, non-governmental and international organizations and diverse professional,



commercial, and civic individuals from 86 countries. The Potsdam Early Warning Conference represented the first major thematic components of IDNDR's concluding evaluation and provided recommendations to ensure disaster reduction into the 21st century.

The conference was organised, with the support of the Government of Germany, within the framework of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. The conference was opened by the German Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Klaus Kinkel, as an expression of Germany's support for disaster reduction.

The subsequent discussions and presentations at the conference confirmed early warning as a core component of national and international prevention strategies for the 21st century. The conference was closed with the issuance of a declaration on early warning. Participants repeatedly emphasized the multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral character of the early warning process.

The participants emphasized that early warning is effective only to the extent that policy makers at national level authority have the will, and make a sustained commitment of resources that will establish protective measures. In all these respects, the importance of training was stressed, as was the requirement to provide

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Impulse aus Potsdam zur Frühwarnung vor Naturkatastrophen

Teilnehmer aus 86 Ländern tagen auf dem Telegrafenberg

POTSDAM (PNN/G.S.) Über 300 Wissenschaftler und Praktiker aus 86 Ländern tagen von heute an bis zum 11. September auf dem Potsdamer Telegrafenberg über die Frühwarrung vor Naturkatstrophen. Bundesaußenminister Klaus Kinkel (FDP) eröffnete als Schirmherr die Konferenz. Wie Prof. Rolf Emmermann, Vorstand des gastgebenden Geoforschungszentrums (GFZ) bekanntgab, werde am Ende eine "Potsdamer Deklaration" zum Schutz vor Naturkatastrophen verabschiedet.

"International IDNDR-Conference on Early Warning Systems for the Reduction of Natural Disasters EWC '93" – so der offizielle Titel der Tagung, Das Kürzel IDNDR steht für "Internationale Dekade für die Reduzierung von Naturkatastrophen", zu der die Generalversammlung der Vereinten Nationen das letzte Jahrzehnt dieses Jahrhunderts erklärt. Von der Potsdamer Konferenz wird eine kritische, interdisziplinäre Bestandsaufnahme des Einsatzes von Frihwarnsystemen bei Klima- und anderen Naturkatastrophen erwartet. Daß die Möglichkeiten hierfür teilweise sehr begrenzt sind, darüber sind sich Wissenschaftler und Politiker weitgehend einig, Kinkel nannte die bessere Koordinierung des Katastrophenmanagements eine "zentrale Aufgabe der Außenminister". Dabei sprach er auch das Oderhochwasser von 1997 an, aus dem Lehren geogen werden müßten. Die Teilnehmer der Konferenz waren vom brandenburgischen Umweltministerium zu einer Exkursion in das Oder-Katstrophengebiet eingeladen worden. Umweltminister Matthias Platzeek erwähnte dabei, daß man mit Polen in Verhandlung stehe um das Hochwasser-Frühwarnsystem

krisensicher zu machen
"Wir müssen mit der Natur unseren Frieden machen", sagte Kinkel und Brandenburgs Unweltminister Matthias Platzeck
(SPD) sprach in seinem Greißwort von dem "Jahrhundertirrtum" der Menschheit, die erzelaubt habe, sich die Natur mittels der schwingeserzt.

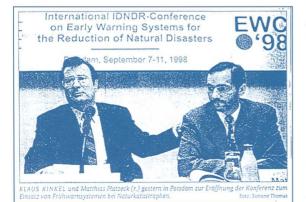
Technik untertan machen zu können. Vielmehr müsse sich der Mensch "in die Natur einpassen". IDNDR-Direktor Philippe Boullé verwies

IDNDR-Direktor Philippe Bouilé verwies darauf, welch große Bedeutung bei Erdbebenkatastrophen wenige Minuten können Erdn Minuten können schon ausreichen daß sich die Menschen in Sicherheit bringen können. Die Erdbebenvorhersage gehört zu den speziellen Forschungsschwerpunkten des Potsdamer GFZ Daher hatte es zunächst verwundert, als Vorstand Prof. Ernmermann sagter "Erdbebenkann man nicht vorhersagen. Doch der Geoforscher erklärte den scheinbaren Wicherspruch: Zwischen Entstehungsort und Katastrophenort eines Bebens bestehen oft große Entfernungen, und es dauere einige Minuten. Dis die verheerenden Auswirkungen eintreten. Überrregionale Beobachtungen und ein schneiler Datenaustausch seien daher immens wichnig. Erste Verträge gebe se dazu mit der Türkei, dem Schwerpunktland deutscher Erdbebenforschung, und mit Armenien. Mit Georgien, Syrien und Israel werden Gespräche über eine Zusammenarheit seißnt.

In Potsdam, betonte Prof. Rolf Emmermann, stand gewissermaßen die Wiege der geophysikalischen Katastrophenforschung. Hier wurde um die Jahrhundertwende der erste Seismograph entwicklet, hier wurden auch zum ersten Mal Atomuhren in der Forschung eingesetzt.

resources for ongoing training activities, public education and the development of both technical and operational capabilities essential for early warning.

Following recurrent flooding of the Rhine River and the 1997 flooding of the Oder, a Congress



was organised by the German IDNDR Committee in Potsdam on 8 October on the theme of the Campaign "Water, too much, too little." Participants reviewed ways in which Germany is facing water-related disasters and where prevention capacities can be strengthened.

In 1998, Germany celebrated 14 October 1998 by opening the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) in Freiburg. The GFMC was inaugurated to the public at the FAO consultation on public policies affecting forest fires, on 28-30 October, 1998.

From 7 to 11 September in Potsdam, the German IDNDR Committee organised a national workshop bringing together journalists, disaster prevention experts, representatives of disaster control agencies and communication researchers.

The aim of this workshop was three-fold:

- Identifying communication problems with respect to disaster and disaster preparedness coverage.
- Fostering communication between journalists and disaster experts on one hand, and between communication researchers and communication practitioners on the other hand.
- Exploring possibilities of cooperation between disaster control and aid agencies and the media.

It was agreed that there is a need to associate disaster information with current events; and that journalists should be provided opportunities to interview and photograph interesting and competent people who are able to express themselves well in front of a microphone.

Journalists present at the meeting suggested that a network of reporters specialising on disaster prevention and mitigation should be initiated. The goal of such a network would be to aid professional communication among the journalists themselves but also to facilitate the