

2ND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION CONFERENCE

International Conference (Warsaw, Poland, 15th–16th October, 2015)

The 2nd Disaster Risk Reduction Conference (DRR) was organised as an international meeting in Warsaw on October 15–16, 2015. The venue was the very modern facility at the National Stadium in Warsaw. The idea of the conference was that of Dr Dorota Rucińska and a group of scientists from the Faculty of Geography and Regional Studies at the University of Warsaw. The Conference sought to provide a forum at which science could meet with practice, around the main subject of natural disasters, and the ways in which we might reduce the risks and consequences for society associated with them. The main partner in organising this Conference from the administrative side was the Department of Safety and Crisis Management of the Mazovian Voivodeship Office, as represented by Krzysztof Dąbrowski.

The Conference was timed to coincide with the United Nations' (UN) International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction, which is marked annually on the second Wednesday of October (in the context of UNISDR, the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction).

Patronage over the Conference was taken up by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland to the United Nations Office, the Mazovia (Mazowieckie Voivodeship) Provincial Governor and the Rector of the University of Warsaw.

At the Opening Ceremony, the invited speaker, Dr Adam C. Bouloukos, (Head of the UNISDR) gave a talk on “*The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030: Next Steps in Implementation*”. In this, he stressed the need to integrate actions from the fields of the economy, law, healthcare, education and technology, in a process that both reduced exposure to natural disasters and worked to enhance society's resilience.

A very interesting keynote lecture was then given by Prof. David E. Alexander, of the Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction at University College London (UCL). The subject here was *Current trends and new challenges in disaster risk reduction*, and

the speaker valuably listed the factors influencing the vulnerability of modern societies to natural disasters, as well as discussing the location of the natural catastrophe or disaster in the contexts of law and ethics. Prof. Alexander believes there to be a certain optimum point in the domain of resilience and adaptation. The trend where risk reduction is to be achieved through adaptation to climate change was also emphasized, while a new phenomenon was taken to be human population growth, almost inevitably leading to migrations and international conflicts in the circumstances of a changing environment.

The rest of the Conferences' first day brought presentations from Zbigniew Śwircz (Disaster Prevention and Recovery and Crisis Management, Ministry of Administration and Digital Affairs), Col. Ireneusz Zygmunt (Armed Forces Operational Command – AFOC), Janusz Szylar (Mazovian Headquarters of the State Fire Service) and Rafał Mańkowski (Polish Insurance Association).

The Conference also played host to presentations in the form of workshops that focused on the results of two international research projects. First came STARFLOOD i.e. “Strengthening And Redesigning European FLOOD risk practices: Towards appropriate and resilient flood risk governance arrangements”, <http://www.starflood.eu/>, in the context of a Workshop moderated by Prof. Zbigniew Kundzewicz. This is a project offering a chance for ideas on the flood protection and prevention measures applied in different countries to be exchanged.

A second Workshop moderated by Prof. Paweł Swianiewicz in turn presented the results of the Polish-Norwegian project entitled POLCITCLIM, and dealing with Adaptation And Mitigation To Climate Change – Local Solutions. The project is in fact a comparative study showing how local communities can and do adapt to climate change challenges. Special emphasis was here put on adaptations in cities (results are available at www.polcitclim.uw.edu.pl).

The second day of the Conference was mainly devoted to presentations by individual authors and a Poster Session. 17 posters presenting the research results of both young and veteran scientists were included.

The success of the Conference can be measured by some statistics. There were 150 participants, while 49 presentations were given. As many as 32 different scientific institutions and organisations were in turn represented.

Overall, the 2nd DRR conference proved to be a very intensive occasion that met the objective in offering many chances for ideas to be exchanged between scientists and the administration. There was thus clear and pronounced interest in a Conferences of this profile being continued with in the future.

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