



– Cooperative Actions for Disaster Risk Reduction –

The 4th International Symposium “Wind Effects on Buildings and Urban Environment”, March 4 - 6, 2009, U-Thant Hall & Elizabeth Rose Hall, UN University, Tokyo, Japan

Recent events remind us of the increasing impacts of nature's destructive power. Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and the earthquake in Sichuan Province of China have made a significant mark this year, especially in terms of the shocking number of deaths and injuries to people and the attendant property loss. These events refresh the memory of the disasters of recent past such as Cyclone Sidr in Bangladesh in 2007 and the tsunami in Indonesia and other countries in the Indian Ocean in 2004. There is also often news of serious damage caused by floods and thunderstorms all over the world. It is noteworthy that these disasters are causing higher level of damage due to increased vulnerability of society to these hazards with crippling impact on the economies and social structure of under-developed countries. Loss of lives and attendant financial losses due to disasters have nearly doubled from 2006 to 2007. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that, global warming has the potential to further exacerbate this scenario through increase in the number and intensity of weather-related disasters.

Meanwhile, as Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary-General of the UN, said recently in Bangladesh, “Almost as dangerous as the cyclones or earthquakes themselves is the myth that the destruction and deaths they cause are somehow unavoidable, the inevitable result of natural calamity”. He continued that “It is true that we cannot prevent the events themselves. But we can determine our response--and, through our actions, either compound disasters or diminish them”. Global action in education and research is a key to achieving this target.

There are many possibilities for coordinated global action to address this challenge. The Hyogo Framework for Action, negotiated in 2005 in the wake of the tsunami, sets out priorities for disaster risk reduction and calls upon the international community to take practical steps to make communities safer. These include strengthening flood prevention measures and early warning systems, and applying relevant building standards to protect critical infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and homes. Also, the International Association for Wind Engineering (IAWE) has been taking initiatives in promoting research and education in wind hazard mitigation for several decades around the world and will continue to devote its energy to the transfer of advanced wind hazard mitigation technologies to developing typhoon/cyclone-prone countries. IAWE always considers wind hazard mitigation at the global level as a priority obligation, because 80 - 85% of the natural disaster economic losses in the world are caused by extreme wind events.



International Association for Wind Engineering

The devastating disasters, e.g., tropical cyclones, are generally accompanied by high waves, storm surge, heavy rains, floods, landslides and lightning. This calls for a pressing need for pooling of expertise and cooperative actions to reduce losses from various types of natural disasters.

This Symposium focusing on the *Cooperative Actions for Disaster Risk Reduction* will be co-hosted by IAWE, UN University, UN/ISDR, ADRC and TPU-GCOE Program. It will provide a stimulating and constructive forum for researchers from various disciplines related to natural disasters, engineers, educators, government officers and citizens specializing in disaster reduction, giving them the opportunity to exchange and share the latest scientific and technical information. It will cover all major disasters including strong winds, earthquakes, floods, tsunamis and landslides. IAWE is indeed very pleased to share its knowledge and information base and resources concerning wind damage mitigation to its partners in mitigation efforts: UN/ISDR, UN University, and to society at large.