



THE INTERNATIONAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SOCIETY

www.tiems.org

Principal office: TIEMS, Albertstraat 40, BE-2880 Bornem, Belgium - Reg. no. 0881.936.668

Executive office postal address: TIEMS, Ostvangveien 29, 0588 Oslo, Norway

TIEMS 16th Annual Conference Press Release

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The 16th Annual Conference of The International Emergency Management Society (TIEMS) was convened in Istanbul, Turkey, on June 9-11, 2009. This international conference brought together scientists, experts and emergency management practitioners from academic and research institutions, industry and governments from many different continents.

TIEMS is an international Society whose network aims to foster research and development, and stimulate the exchange of information on the use of innovative methods and technologies within emergency and disaster management. The Society's goals are to improve the ability of communities to avoid, mitigate, respond to, and recover from natural and technological disasters.

This year's annual conference was particularly marked by strong participation from China, the country slated to host the 17th Annual Conference planned next year in Beijing. Istanbul Technical University hosted this year's conference. In his opening remarks, Professor Muhammed Sahin, the University President, welcomed participants and encouraged them to explore practical solutions to mitigate risks of natural disasters and costs in the aftermath of natural disasters and shocks. He noted that Turkey was highly exposed to natural disasters and had been hard hit by a major earthquake just a couple of years earlier.

Senior officials from the Turkish government attended the conference, in particular Mr. Hikmet Cakmak, the Vice-Governor of Istanbul, who provided the opening address for the conference. He called upon TIEMS' delegates to draw on the international nature of the organization and utilize their global expertise to address local problems facing distressed communities and countries in the aftermath of natural disasters and shocks around the world. In particular, he noted that while developing countries were highly exposed, they disproportionately lack the technology and expertise to deal with disaster prevention and management. The platform established by TIEMS could greatly enhance information flow and exchange, providing for disaster management and preparedness at minimum costs.

Indeed, the conference provided an opportunity to undertake a critical overview of challenges facing countries and regions of the world concerning natural disasters and disaster management. In particular, the conference highlighted the rapid increase in the number of natural disasters and the sustainability of these events, which has been growing almost exponentially since the 1980s. The conference also discussed the globalization of natural disasters, particularly hydro-meteorological hazards and geological hazards, which are exacerbated by global warming. Long-term projections show a global drying trend, with the proportion of

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land surface affected by extreme droughts predicted to increase from 1% (current rate) to over 30% by the end of the 21st century.

Delegates noted that the distribution of natural disasters was not uniform across regions of the globe, even in the case of global warming. It was noted that while the consequences of global warming were projected into the future for most advanced economies and developed countries, they were already being felt in a number of developing countries, in particular, the overwhelming majority of low-income countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, most low-income countries lack the technological infrastructure and human resources needed to deal with these crises. In some countries, there is simply no framework for disaster management and preparedness.

The participants recognized that progress in the areas of disaster management depend on advances in research and development, and on the critical support and commitment of governments and international organizations. They called upon scientists and international experts attending the conference to draw upon the platform offered by TIEMS to foster the development and application of new technologies for disaster management through international collaboration and exchange. They also stressed that progress on this front depended on a number of critical initial steps to be undertaken by countries, including:

- The establishment of an operational national disaster management strategy in countries where such a framework is missing.
- Building national capacities in the areas of risk identification and mitigation, which are critical for effective risk transfer and preparedness.
- Strengthening the linkages between natural disaster management and environmental protection, particularly in light of the growing implications of environmental degradation.
- Increasing investment in scientific research and human resources at the national level, possibly drawing on TIEMS' international expertise and experience.
- Drawing on risk sharing mechanisms, in part through government disaster assistance and the insurance markets. This would improve emergency response and preparedness and mitigate fiscal costs and contingent liabilities associated with natural disasters.
- Expanding TIEMS' international outreach—the participants welcomed the geographical expansion achieved by TIEMS under the leadership of its current President and encouraged the management to work even harder to bring more participants and experts from developing countries on board.

In his closing remarks, the President of TIEMS, K. Harald Drager, thanked the conference participants and the Turkish hosts for their contribution to the success of the 16th Annual Conference. He also praised a number of participants, whose research efforts in the areas of disaster management were awarded prizes for their exceptional quality and contribution to the field. He also encouraged participants to submit their papers for consideration and publication through the International Journal of Emergency Management. Finally, he invited participants to work even harder to ensure the success of the 17th international annual conference planned next year in Beijing, China, see <http://www.tiems.org/index.php?id=89>

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