High-Level Simposium

Strengthening collaboration between Ministries of Environment, Meteorological and Water Services and Disaster Risk Management Offices.

"Ensuring Efficient Climate Information, Disaster Risk Reduction and Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems in Latin America and the Caribbean"

The Symmposium was held on Tuesday, October 24, 2023 in Panama City, within the framework of the Climate Week for Latin America and the Caribbean. It was attended by 50 representatives from 21 countries including authorities from Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, along with directors and delegates from 11 National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs), authorities from national agencies for disaster reduction, representatives of international cooperation and agencies of the United Nations System.

The symposium had the active participation of 21 panelists with extensive experience and diverse perspectives.

Below are the most relevant key messages from each of the thematic panels:

Contribution of Weather, Climate and Hydrological Services to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework

1. The planet faces a triple planetary crisis, but in Latin America and the Caribbean, unprecedented levels of polarization, conflict and threats to democracy are also in place.
2. This symposium evidences a more integrated action through the growing regional collaboration of WMO, UNDRR, UNEP and the Instituto Interamericano para la Investigación del Cambio Global (IAI), to support national institutions in harmonizing the agendas of development, environment, risk management through climate action and scientific research to increase resilience at different levels from local to national.
3. NMHSs contribute directly and effectively to most of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through information services for the agricultural, water resources, health, energy and infrastructure sectors, as well as early warnings that, by mitigating the adverse impacts of extreme events, promote the well-being of the population, employment generation and, finally, poverty reduction.
4. Despite the multiple contributions of NMHSs to society and a growing demand for information, at the same time, they face increasing disinvestment by Governments with direct impact on their operations.
5. Hydrometeorological observation networks requires continuous financial resources for operation and maintenance. This historical investment from Governments is at increasing risk of being lost or degraded if necessary resources are not injected for its modernization and continued operation.
6. It is essential to include NMHSs in the initiatives and projects related with climate adaptation and to consolidate their articulation in national adaptation plans.
7. There are good examples in the region where the financing for the operation of NMHSs linked to essential services in strategic sectors such as aviation, the energy sector, agriculture and others has achieved autonomy and financial sustainability for their operations.

Legislative, policy and governance framworks to ensure coordination, sustainability and data sharing.

1) Public policies must innovate financial mechanisms to foster prosperity in a multidimensional and integrated manner, and ensuring the inclusion of the private sector and strategic alliances.
2) In a more complex world, governance means improving institutional mechanisms for effective decision-making on priority issues for Governments. This implies strengthening capacities to achieve the necessary coherence, inter-institutional coordination, accountability and effectiveness in the implementation of actions.
3) Experience in the Caribbean shows that, despite a long history of NMHSs development, the legal frameworks for their operation did not exist and this is essential for the governance and sustainability of their operations.
4) The sustainability of interventions begins with the proper inclusion of local actors, and those working at the community level promoting their participation in international forums and organizations.
5) Knowledge management systems must ensure, through adequate legal frameworks and governance, the transference of good practices, innovation in solving society's problems, and effective implementation mechanisms.
6) It is essential to generate mechanisms to attract innovation in problem solving from academia, local actors and civil society in general.

Good Practices for collaboration between NMHSs, Ministries of Environmental and Disaster Risk Management Entities and Systemas to improve Multi-Hazard risk information and Early Warning Systems for all.

1. During the hurricane season in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, a volcanic eruption happened and led to a total disruption in the islands, an evacuation by sea. However, the management of information for air traffic, the dissemination of volcanic ash and the permanent flow of information from the NMHS for simultaneous Multi-Hazard response operations contribute to cope with this multi-hazard situation.
2. The experience of the Environmental Observatory of El Salvador promoting the collaboration of volunteer observers and actors from the development sectors has contributed to make progress on impact based forecasting. This has been very well received by users and assito on better preparedness and response actions.
3. The experience of the 20 years of Centro Internacional para la Investigación del Fenómeno El Niño (CIIFEN)[1] has allowed them to innovate on communicating scientific and technical information to different audiences and decision makers, this involves, among others, the use of local visual language, co-design with users, social networks capmpaingns and strong collaboration with local communities.
4. The Centro de Manejo de Desastres de Brasil (CEMADEN)'s experience[2], integrates hydrometeorological information services with information on vulnerability and exposure, in addition to education and training efforts for the population. This integral approach has mitigated the impact of extreme events, reducing the loss of human lives, thanks to this comprehensive approach.

[1] International Centre for El Niño Research
[2] National Center for Monitoring and Alerts of Natural Disasters

Coordination between National Meteorological and Hydrological Services, Ministries of Environment and Disaster Risk Management Entities and Systems: The Way Forward

1. The challenges of development require a holistic, synergistic and systematic approach to optimize efforts, financial resources and coherence in action.
2. The current times require more than ever to break down silos and promote effective coordination schemes based on mutual trust, the articulation of policies and demonstrating the benefit that good practices bring to communities. This involves institutions, the media, the private sector, among others.
3. The growing inter-agency collaboration in the region contributes to replicating this approach at the national level and supporting Member states in optimizing governance, public policies and investments required to ensure efficient Climate Information, Disaster Risk Reduction and Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems in Latin America and the Caribbean.
4. It is essential to strengthen the dialogue between the entities that operate the Early Warning Systems (EWS) and the ministerial planning and finance authorities, but now with subregional approaches, delving into the gaps and particularities, in order to address them effectively.