

Symposium on Application of Geospatial Technology in Urban Disaster Management

Summary of Discussion

In support of the Third United Nations Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR), a symposium on the Application of Geospatial Technology in Urban Disaster Management was held in Sendai, Japan on March 13, 2015, organized by Geospatial Information Authority of Japan (GSI) and the International Steering Committee for Global Mapping (ISCGM). Participants, who are leading experts from national disaster management agencies, national geospatial information authorities, regional and international organizations, and industries met to discuss policy and technical issues on the application of geospatial technology in disaster management cycle. The following reflects the main conclusions of the symposium.

Conclusions:

1. The participants recognized the importance of geospatial information technology at every phase of disaster cycle, enabling decision makers to prepare for and respond to disasters in a timely manner as well as assisting individuals in understanding potential risks and taking prompt actions in case of disasters.
2. The participants reaffirmed the need of a mechanism to monitor and measure the progress of urban hazard mapping, which is still in progress despite the clear acknowledgement in the Hyogo Framework for Action in 2005. In this context, the participants welcomed the ISCGM's proposal to launch a web portal of urban hazard maps of major cities in the world and to update it regularly to monitor the progress of urban hazard mapping conducted by the Member States and other relevant organizations. This serves as a potential indicator for the post-2015 framework in order to reduce risks in rapidly expanding urban areas.
3. The participants affirmed the vital role of the community analytics for urban hazards in order to assess, predict and evaluate community events, behaviors, well-being and development. In particular, the participants agreed that analytics utilizing location information are very useful for disaster preparations and assessment of disaster impact, and brings synergy when combined with the development of urban hazard maps.
4. It was recognized that some developing countries do not have adequate capacity to prepare reliable digital geospatial data sets for hazard analyses, including hazard maps, and that without much assistance in capacity building in these countries, where vulnerabilities to disasters have been and will be increasing, true disaster risk reduction would not be achieved globally.

Participants agreed that international and regional assistance should be enhanced in this area.

5. The participants also recognized a need to strengthen the relationships between the national disaster management agencies and the national geospatial information authorities to enhance the use of reliable geospatial information in order to contribute to the successful implementation of post 2015 framework for disaster risk reduction. In this regard, enhanced collaboration among agencies dealing with different information sources was recognized.
6. Participants recognized the potential usefulness of crowdsourced information in disaster management and urged further efforts to be devoted to improve the accuracy, reliability and relevance of such information.
7. The participants shared the view that this symposium was a good opportunity to reconfirm the contributing role of geospatial information technology in urban disaster management prior to WCDRR, and hoped that the outcomes of the symposium be reflected in the discussion of WCDRR, leading to a fruitful outcome.

March 13, 2015

Sendai, Japan