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# World Conference of Drowning Prevention 2011

## Discussion Forum:

### Future role of lifesaving agencies in disaster risk reduction

**Thursday, May 13, 2011 from 13:50 to 14:50**

Non Nouc Conference Room

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Aquatic disasters claim many lives and affect many people every year. They have accounted for at least one-third of all disaster-related deaths during the last decade. In addition, water-related hazards strongly affect the eastern coastal regions of the major continents as well as some interior regions of North and South America, Europe, and Asia. Total relief aid in 2010 was over US\$6billion. Of this, 41% went to water-related disasters, while 57% alone went to the Haiti earthquake. Furthermore, since 2000, more than five thousand people have been killed and more than one hundred million affected each year by floods alone. The impact of aquatic disasters is higher to the most vulnerable populations, where water safety in general is given less attention. In addition, climate change is likely to result in an increase in both the frequency and intensity of weather-related aquatic disasters, while lessons learned from recent water-related emergencies have highlighted the potential effects of “natech” disasters.

The “Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters” was adopted by the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in January 2005. It is intended to significantly reduce disaster losses in terms of deaths and injuries, but also of social, economic and environmental impact. Its priorities for action include making disaster risk reduction a national and local priority; performing disaster risk analysis and enhancing early warning; using knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience; reducing underlying risk factors; and strengthening disaster preparedness.

Traditional aquatic life saving focuses on education, prevention, and rescue in non-disaster situations. Lifesaving organizations are organized safety-oriented groups working on the interface between the land and aquatic environments. This gives them unique local knowledge, networks, skills and equipment, which have always proven invaluable in disaster situations. The International Life Saving Federation (ILS) and some member organizations, in conjunction with other international partners and local resources, can and do assist with aquatic disaster mitigation, preparedness, response and experience feedback.

While lifeguards are inherently Lifesaving organizations they are variably involved in disaster management. They generally provide volunteer disaster services, focused on prevention, preparedness and response. However, disaster preparedness and response both require resources and organization that only a few lifesaving organizations can afford. Nevertheless, lifesaving organizations have traditionally played a very important role in aquatic disaster mitigation through public outreach programs and citizen awareness activities, since many basic water safety skills are the same in disaster and non-disaster situations.

The objective of this discussion is to point out future trends in the role of lifesaving organizations in disaster management. The following agenda is drafted as an outline:

1. Introduction: overview of aquatic disasters; disaster-generated needs of the population; and the current role of lifesaving organizations in disaster management (5 min)
2. Discussion: How are lifesaving organizations involved in disaster management today? What activities do they perform?
3. Discussion: Analysis of disaster-generated population needs vs. capacities of lifesaving organizations in terms of disaster risk reduction.
  - a. How can we increase the resilience of the population in times of disaster?
  - b. What skills and resources are available? For what activities are they appropriate? Are they well-oriented?
  - c. How do these activities relate to the traditional role of lifesaving organizations?
4. Discussion: Towards an international (and national) framework for action