

**International Roundtable on Natural Disaster Management: Lessons  
from Natural Disasters, Policy Issues and Mitigation Strategies  
Vellore (India), 8-12 January 2007**

***PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES:*** 13 (11 member countries of the NAM S&T Centre)

***NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:*** Twenty eight participants of the Roundtable from 13 countries included 13 overseas experts and professionals

A disaster is an occurrence such as tsunami, earthquake, flood, fire, hurricane, tornado, storm, drought, explosion, volcanic eruption, spread of epidemic, building collapse, transportation accident or any other situation leading to the human suffering, or creating such situation in which the victims needs assistance to alleviate the suffering. These disasters have a significant impact on the economic growth and development, social and economic infrastructure and the environment, and keep many of the developing countries in acute perennial poverty. Risk assessment; forecasting, monitoring and early warning; emergency management; developing a disaster prevention strategy; improving awareness; integrated sustainable development; and finally, political commitment with the involvement of professional and scientific bodies and public-private partnership are some of the key elements in context with the natural disasters. The vulnerability to natural disasters combined with socio-economic vulnerability of the people poses a great challenge for the government machineries and underscores the need for comprehensive plans for disaster preparedness and mitigation, as well as the training and capacity building of the officials dealing with emergency situations. Every disaster provides policy makers an opportunity to put their policies on the anvil. Professionals charged with the responsibility to counter natural disasters, likewise, get a good opportunity to introspect and see by hindsight where their preparedness plans and strategies have failed them, and why? Scientists too get their food for thought as also fresh ideas and the rare ammunition to re-write their research proposals towards the fulfillment of their insatiable quest for improved, cost effective solutions. Since the hazardous events are frequent, degree of preparedness is often low and since the urbanization is out of control, the losses are staggering. the strategic thinking to be able to unfold scenarios before they really occur so that road map could be updated, game plan could be revised, and strategic sense could be sharpened. Sharing of resources, pooling of expertise and leveraging of capacities come naturally with strategic thinking. Since developing countries are the worst hit by natural disasters and lack even the minimal of resources and wherewithal to fight natural disasters, their problems are more or less of the same genre. Therefore it is essential to build joint programmes and win-win partnerships on natural disasters management and mitigation.

With the aforementioned in view, the NAM S&T Centre with the approval of its Governing Council organised a 5-days international roundtable on Natural Disaster Management with the theme of Lessons from Natural Disasters, Policy Issues and Mitigation Strategies at Vellore, India during 8–12 January 2007 in association with the Centre for Disaster Mitigation & Management (CDMM) of the VIT University.

The Roundtable was inaugurated by Honourable Mr. S. Regupathy, the Minister of State for Home Affairs of the Government of India after lighting of the lamp and inaugural speeches by Mr. M. Sashidhar Reddy, Member, National Disaster Management Authority of India; Mr. G. Viswanathan, Chancellor, VIT University; Prof. P. Radhakrishnan, Vice Chancellor of VIT University; Prof. R. K. Bhandari, Chairman, Centre for Disaster Mitigation & Management (CDMM); Prof. Dr. Arun P. Kulshreshtha, Director, NAM S&T Centre; and others.

Twenty eight participants of the Roundtable from 13 countries included 13 overseas experts and professionals from Bangladesh [Dr. Munir Ahmed, Executive Director, Technological Assistance for Rural Advancement (TARA), Dhaka], Brunei Darussalam [Mr. Sallehuddin Haji Ibrahim, Senior Superintendent, National Disaster Management Center], Colombia [Dr. Jose Daniel Pabon, Associate Professor, Department of Geography, National University of Colombia, Bogotá], Indonesia [Dr. Andi Eka Sakya, Executive Secretary, National Agency for Meteorology & Geophysics (BMG), Jakarta Pusat], Malaysia [Mme. Che Gayah Ismail, Deputy Director General, Malaysian Meteorology Department, Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation], Mauritius [Mr. S. N. Sok Appadu, Director, Prime Minister's Office, Meteorological Services, Vacoas], Myanmar [Dr. Aye Ni Aung, Assistant Director, Department of Technical and Vocational Education, Ministry of Science and Technology], Pakistan [Mr. Zain-Ul-Abedin, Assistant Scientific Advisor, Scientific and Technological Research Division, Ministry of Science and Technology], South Africa [Dr. Raymond Durrheim, Fellow, Natural Resources and the Environment Unit, CSIR], Sri Lanka [Mrs. Siththy Marina Mohamed, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Resettlement], United Arab Emirates [Lt. Col. Jassim Abdulla Humeed, Chief of Operation Department and Lt. Col. Jassim Mohammad Al Ahmad from the General Administration for Civil Defence] and Vietnam [Mr. Phung Van Thanh, Senior Expert, Ministry of Science & Technology].

The lectures on various facets of disaster management and mitigation, such as earthquakes, landslides, wind disasters, cyclones, floods and tsunamis were delivered by eminent Indian scholars Prof. Vinod K. Sharma, Professor, Disaster Management, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi; Prof. S.M. Ramasamy, Professor & Head, Director, Centre for Remote Sensing and Geosciences, Bharathidasan University, Trichy; Dr. N. Lakshmanan, Director, Structural Engineering Research Centre (SERC), Chennai; Dr. A.R. Santha Kumar, Visiting Professor, Institute of Technology, Madras and Advisor, UNDP Recovery Support for Shelter Reconstruction; Prof. C.V.R. Murty, Civil Engineering Department, Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur; Mr. S.S. Porwal, VSM, Chief Engineer, Indian Border Roads Organization; Dr. T.V.S.R Appa Rao, Distinguished Scientist, CDMM; and Prof. D.V.S. Bhagavanulu, Dean and Professor, Civil Engineering Department, VIT University. Prof. R. K. Bhandari, Chairman, CDMM conducted the Roundtable proceedings, delivered the keynote address on Earthquakes and also gave a lecture on Lessons from Landslides.

The other participants of the Roundtable were Dr. C. J. Kumanan, Senior Lecturer, Centre for Remote Sensing and Geosciences, Bharathidasan University, Trichy; Dr. V.M. Sharma, Chief Consultant, Associated Instruments Manufacturing India Limited, New Delhi; Mr. R. E. Bhosle, Associate, Consulting Engineering Services (I) Pvt. Ltd., Navi Mumbai; Dr. S. Arunachalam, Deputy Director, Structural Engineering Research Centre, Chennai; Mr. G. Prasad Babu, Geological Specialist, CDMM; and the faculty and engineering students of VIT University.

The overseas participants mainly presented the country status reports through power point presentations and in some cases, showed short films on the disasters and mitigation and rehabilitation efforts. All the Roundtable participants also undertook three Auto Certification Tests, respectively on Cyclones, Earthquakes and Landslides, for which the CDs were prepared by CDMM. The final concluding session in the technical programme was in the form of a panel discussion on disaster management policies and strategies that resulted in adopting a Vellore Resolution 2007, a copy of which is appended below.

On the concluding day of the Roundtable Prof. Arun P. Kulshreshtha, Director, NAM S&T Centre in his address read out the document on Vellore Resolution 2007 and Prof. R.K. Bhandari, Chairman CDMM briefed on the highlights of the Roundtable. Mr. P.G. Dhar Chakrabarti, IAS, Executive Director, National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM), Delhi apprised the audience on the Indian scene on disaster management and mitigation activities and Mr. L.K. Tripathy, IAS, Chief Secretary, Government of Tamil Nadu, India gave the Presidential Address. Finally, the Valedictory Address was given by Honourable Mr. M.V. Rajasekharan, Minister of State for Planning, Government of India.

The participants complimented Prof. R.K. Bhanadari, Chairman CDMM and his team for the successful and fruitful organization of the Roundtable and for the excellent hospitality extended and arrangements made for the delegates. They expressed deep gratitude for the keen personal interest taken by Mr. G. Viswanathan, Chancellor, VIT University in the organisation of this scientific event of the NAM S&T Centre.