

The supranational view: action to drive disaster risk reduction

Interviewer: [Gareth Byatt](#) – Principal Consultant, [Risk Insight Consulting](#)
Interviewee: [Ms Mami Mizutori](#) – Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and Head of [the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction \(UNDRR\)](#)

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[Work Programme 2024-2025](#) (Source: UNDRR)

Dear Ms Mizutori,

Thank you for making the time to discuss the mission of UNDRR to help decision makers across the globe better understand and act on risk. ¹

I am particularly keen to discuss [the UNDRR Work Programme 2024-2025](#) (published in October 2023) with you, as this Work Programme drives action for the next few years, with four defined objectives focusing on (1) disaster data and information, (2) governance, (3) investment / funding and (4) knowledge sharing on disaster risk and sustainable development.

Perhaps we can first set the scene about progress towards reducing disaster risk.

¹ [UNDRR – Our work](#)

The Disasters Avoided initiative highlights examples of proactive action around the world to avoid disasters.

1. The Sendai Framework and progress towards its targets

A number of UNDRR publications released in 2022 and 2023 describe how the world is not currently on track to achieve the targets of the Sendai Framework.

Box 1. Targets of the Sendai Framework

- (a) Substantially reduce global disaster mortality by 2030, aiming to lower the average per 100,000 global mortality rate in the decade 2020–2030 compared to the period 2005–2015.
- (b) Substantially reduce the number of affected people globally by 2030, aiming to lower the average global figure per 100,000 in the decade 2020–2030 compared to the period 2005–2015.
- (c) Reduce direct disaster economic loss in relation to global gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030.
- (d) Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, among them health and educational facilities, including through developing their resilience by 2030.
- (e) Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020.
- (f) Substantially enhance international cooperation to developing countries through adequate and sustainable support to complement their national actions for implementation of the present Framework by 2030.
- (g) Substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to people by 2030.

[Work Programme 2024-2025](#) (Source: UNDRR)

[The Midterm Review of the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030](#), completed in 2023, notes that:

- There has been an increase in the number of people affected by disasters since 2015.
- Disasters are expensive to respond to.
- Funding for disaster risk reduction has stalled.

The Global Assessment Report, [GAR2022](#) (a periodic flagship report produced by UNDRR on the status of disaster risk reduction) states that despite commitments to build resilience, tackle climate change and create sustainable development pathways, current societal, political and economic choices are doing the reverse – and that **to change course new approaches are needed**. This will require transformations in governance systems and how systemic risk is understood and addressed. Doing more of the same will not be enough. ²

If I understand correctly, the Work Programme 2024-2025 is a response to the need for greater action to achieve the targets of the Sendai Framework. I'd like to start my questions with an overarching point about whether there should be a globally consistent way to describe disasters.

² [Global Assessment Report \(2022\)](#)

The Disasters Avoided initiative highlights examples of proactive action around the world to avoid disasters.

2. Avoiding disasters and reducing risk – what’s in a name?

Gareth: The 2024-2025 Work Programme document does not refer to natural disasters, it refers to natural and human-made hazards and disasters that can result from them.

Why is it important to refer to “disasters” rather than “natural disasters”? We continue to see different terms being used (for example, I often see the media referring to natural disasters).

Ms Mizutori: *You are absolutely right that different terms are used, and not only by the media. Some member states in their formal speeches and remarks use the term “natural disasters”. This is a term that, it is important to note, UNDRR was using a while ago. However, when we unpack what a disaster is, we see that it is a combination of a hazard – which can be natural or human-made – together with exposure and vulnerability. The premise of disaster risk reduction is that if we can work on one, two or hopefully all three of these elements of hazards, exposure and vulnerability then we can reduce disaster risk.*

It is also important to acknowledge that the reason a hazard turns into a disaster is largely because of our own decisions on how we develop and how we invest. There is nothing natural about disasters. This is why we have a campaign at UNDRR called “[No Natural Disasters](#)”. Hazards can be natural, and they can also be human made. This distinction is important, and it is linked to why we refer to disasters, not natural disasters.



The #NoNaturalDisasters campaign (Source: [UNDRR](#))

Indeed, if we consider a deeper historical context, a long time ago people made a connection between disasters and the will of their god or gods in their religion. Religious and political leaders a long time ago would describe how a disaster was a way of punishing us. Humankind has made strides to move away from this mindset. We have to make sure that our own acts, policies and decisions are seen as either helping us to be resilient, or conversely, they can lead to disasters occurring. We have to acknowledge this distinction in the way we act.

Gareth: Thank you for this explanation, Ms Mizutori. One of the key points we focus on in [our Disasters Avoided work](#) is that the choices we make can either contribute to disasters being avoided, or they can lead to them occurring. We hope that by highlighting through our work examples of disasters avoided, more people can be aware of how it can be achieved, and how they can play their part in reducing risk and preventing disasters.

I would like to explore some of the detail of the Work Programme 2024-2025 now, and how planned activities will help us to avoid disasters.

3. Objective 1 (of the Work Programme 2024-2025): Countries use quality information and analysis to reduce risks and inform development decisions

Gareth: I have three questions relating to this objective.

I note that Deliverable 1.1.1 describes how UNDRR will deliver guidance materials, technical tools and training for countries on cascading, multi-hazard and systemic risks to strengthen in-country risk assessment capability (I appreciate that a wide variety of UNDRR training is made available globally). How do you decide what topics to focus and prioritise on in this Deliverable?

Ms Mizutori: *One thing that is particularly important for the Work Programme 2024-2025 in terms of how we prioritise and how we choose to do what and where is the solid foundation that the programme is built on. This foundation is [the political declaration from the Midterm Review process of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030](#), which concluded in May 2023. The political declaration is the document that the member states adopted by consensus on 18 May 2023. It is a document that, importantly, contains a long list of Calls to Action. It describes what has been identified as achievements from 2015 until mid 2023, and the gaps that still exist. The Call to Action is the call to fill the gaps. A lot of the things that we will be doing through the Work Programme 2024-2025 are based on this political declaration.*

There is another important aspect to how we prioritise action, which is through the whole UN system, including all UN agencies, and Country teams and Resident Coordinators on the ground. What do I mean by this – I mean that since 2015, the importance of risk-informed activities and how we support member states to take risk-informed decisions has been a key focus. The collective knowledge and expertise have grown over time within the UN system. One of the things that we at UNDRR do is work and liaise closely with other UN agencies to discuss and agree on priority areas of action, which helps us to decide which tools to develop and which types of guidance to issue.

A related key aspect of how we work is that we are a demand-driven organisation. We respect that governments around the world and non-governmental stakeholders, through their experience of dealing with disaster risk reduction since the launch of The Sendai Framework in 2015, and for many of them it stretches back before 2015, know what they need, and they know what is lacking. We continuously consult with a group that we call [the Sendai Focal Points](#), who are Focal Points in the member states and our direct counterparts, to discuss what is needed to build resilience in their countries, their cities and their communities. Through these discussions we review and check our priorities.

To give you a practical example of prioritising our action, we launched an online course in June 2023 about how countries and governments can better understand the links between Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction. It might sound obvious, but on the ground it's hard. There was a strong request to support member states to improve their understanding, and in response we developed this online course. In the five months between June and October 2023, over 8,000 people worldwide had registered and taken it. This is, I think, an example of listening to the needs of the countries and stakeholders that we serve, and creating tools that will help them enhance their resilience.



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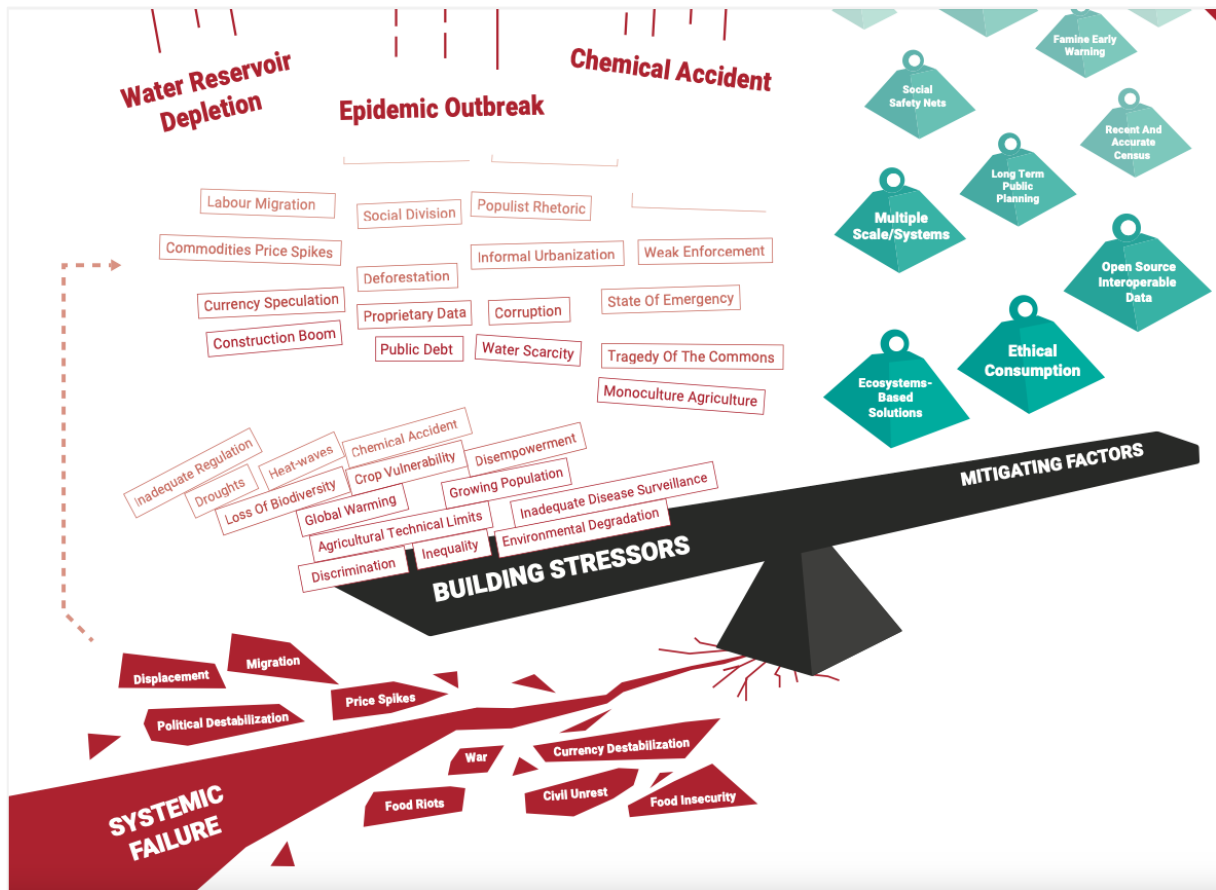
Online training course developed by UNDRR (Source: [UNDRR](#))

Gareth: Thank you for this explanation and for this example of “putting words into action”, Ms Mizutori. I get a strong sense of the commitment to inclusiveness and the value of working closely with and listening to member countries, other UN agencies and other stakeholders to make sure UNDRR focuses on their highest priority needs, whilst also working towards a long-term strategy. Resources are finite of course, and we need to use them wisely. As an example of the collaboration between UNDRR and other UN agencies, I have been pleased to liaise with teams in UNDP during 2023, and I know of various projects that UNDRR and UNDP carry out jointly.

Leading on from this point, you mentioned [the midterm review of the implementation of the Sendai Framework](#) just now. With regard to other reviews taking place, I know that in 2024 a Special Report of [the Global Assessment Report](#) (GAR) is due to be published. Deliverable 1.1.2 of the Work Programme 2024-2025 focuses on knowledge and innovation on the connectiveness, and the systemic nature of risk. How do you plan to address systemic risk, and what do you see as the key objectives and definition of success of the planned Global Assessment Report (GAR) Special Report 2024, which I believe is being produced to support this effort?

Ms Mizutori: Starting with the systemic nature of risk, this is something that UNDRR has been advocating since the time when the Sendai Framework was adopted (in 2015), and also whilst it was still in the negotiation phase. The risks that surround and impact us right now are not siloed; they are systemic and connected, and their impacts are often cascading. Our response and solutions need to be systemic to deal with them. For a long time, I have had the impression that for many of our stakeholders, the concept of systemic risk sounded rather theoretical, and that people struggled, for understandable reasons, to grasp what it meant. The meaning of systemic risk became clearer to many people when the world experienced the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, which started as a local outbreak and health issue, it very quickly became a pandemic that not only impacted people’s health but impacted every aspect of society – education, employment, the way we relate to each other, how we live and much else. In our modern times, the world is arguably much more connected than when previous global pandemics occurred, such as when the Spanish Flu occurred over 100 years ago. The COVID-19 pandemic brought the systemic nature of risk in an interconnected world to people’s attention, everywhere. However, we still need to make sure that everyone understands the systemic nature of risk, and importantly, how we approach the risks we face systemically with solutions.



Systemic failure diagram (Source: [UNDRR GAR 2019](#))

The Global Assessment Report (GAR), which is our global flagship risk report, has a part to play in this effort. Until the last few years, we have produced a GAR every two years. Now, we have decided to publish a main GAR every three years, with the next GAR due for publication in 2025. Every year in between the main GAR, we publish a special edition which focuses on a specific theme. In 2023 [the GAR Special Report was about disaster risk reduction and some specific SDGs](#) (Sustainable Development Goals). In 2021 [we issued a GAR Special Report on drought](#). As you have mentioned, the GAR Special Report 2024 will be about systemic risk. The way we are producing this edition of GAR is a new approach for us – we are going to apply a disaster forensics methodology to recent major disasters. The aim is to unpack the key factors that contributed to the impacts they had, and to analyse how we can reduce the risks of disasters in future.

What we would also like to do with the GAR Special Report 2024 is to emphasise the core concepts of disaster risk reduction, noting that even when risks are systemic, we can work on certain factors in order to control and manage risk, and minimise the impact they can have. In other words, let's not give up. Risks are systemic and connected, yet there are ways to reduce them. This goes back to the point that we would like to make sure that everyone understands that disasters are not natural, and that even systemic and complex risks can be mitigated. This is the core focus of the GAR Special Report 2024. Importantly, we are aiming to provide through this report concrete recommendations for policy makers on how to prevent and avoid disasters, how to adapt better to climate change, how to implement strong and robust early warning systems and solutions, and how to plan better for sustainable development.

Gareth: Thank you for this explanation, Ms Mizutori. I can see several linkages between the Work Programme 2024-2025 and the GAR Special Report 2024. If I understand correctly, the intent is to develop this Report with stakeholders from a wide range of fields and disciplines to focus on how to approach systemic risk. This seems to link to the point we described earlier, about UNDRR working with a broad range of people.

Ms Mizutori: Absolutely. When we talk about connectivity and systemic risk, it is for governments and many other stakeholders to work together to design solutions, which may change over time. Such stakeholders include academia, the private sector, civil society organisations, scientists, technologists and others – the inclusiveness that you refer to is important to help us produce the GAR Special Report 2024.

Gareth: The focus of GAR Special Report 2024 leads me to my next question, Ms Mizutori, which is about a key element to understanding systemic risk – having data and information in order to understand and then act upon it.

Deliverable 1.3.2 of the Work Programme describes an intent for a new-generation tracker for hazardous events, losses and damages, to be used by at least 100 countries. Why is this tracker needed, and what may it entail?

Ms Mizutori: UNDRR has been supporting countries collect data about disasters for some time, including supporting member states to track their losses from disasters. If countries don't understand the losses and damages that arise from disasters, they cannot agree on the best policies to address the situation. Understanding what kinds of hazards have resulted in damage in various ways, and the connections to exposure and vulnerability, is important.

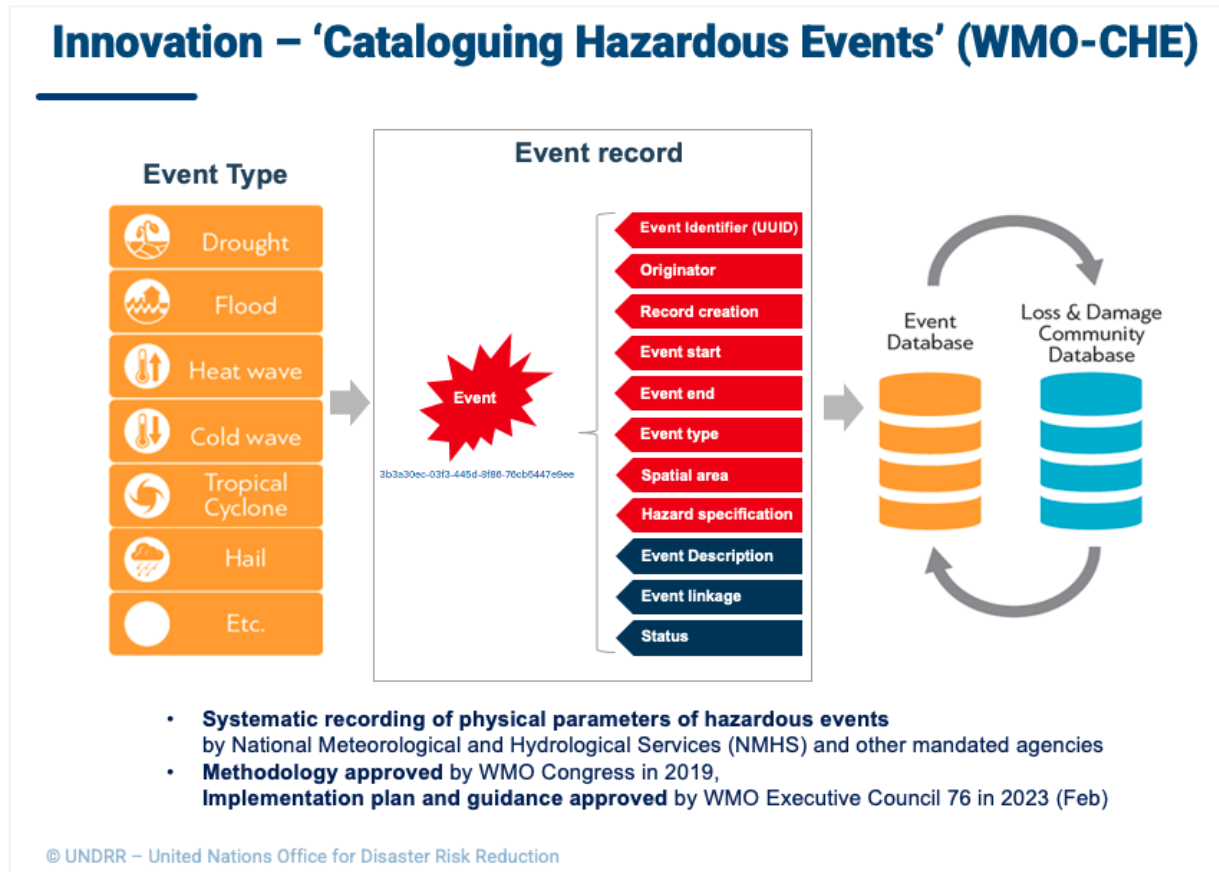
Some countries use their own systems to track disaster events, but others, around 110, use a system we developed called “desinventar” that is now 30 years old. To update the system, UNDRR is collaborating with UNDP and WMO to develop a new generation tracking system under this Work Programme Deliverable 1.3.2. The new system will have the following features:

1. Ability to link hazardous events (e.g. tropical depressions) with cascading disaster events (e.g. tropical cyclone, coastal floods, landslides) and their respective impacts (human, economic, infrastructure).
2. Higher levels of data disaggregated by socio-economic and sectoral impacts.
3. A fully interoperable system to seamlessly connect with different other databases.

The new system will greatly enhance the efficiency of early warning systems, while calibrating risk models through evidence-based data. Though not formally agreed, a systematic collection of such data will be very relevant for countries to assess their loss and damage funding needs and enhance the ability to address them.

Once each country understands and reports on the impacts to their geographies, we can also have an aggregation of the data globally. We currently track this in the Sendai Framework Monitor system.

At this point, 157 out of 193 member states are using this monitoring this system. It is only when we review this data holistically and look at the global impact of disasters that we can have a reliable baseline, and measure achievements for reducing the risk and reducing the impacts of disasters.



Cataloguing hazardous events (Source: UNDRR-WMO)

4. Objective 2: Disaster risk reduction governance strengthened at global, regional, national and local levels

Gareth: I can see linkages between the new-generation tracker for hazardous events, losses and damages, the Sendai Framework’s main seven targets, and the training focus in the Work Programme 2024-2025.

Moving on to Objective 2 of the Work Programme and its focus on governance, I have two questions about it.

First, we have talked about the role of governments a few times in this interview. To support the focus on doing things differently, do any aspects of the existing governance framework for disaster risk reduction need to be updated to address systemic disaster risk, and how to better monitor lead indicators of risk?

***Ms Mizutori:** To be honest, I think that the global framework we have currently, in the form of the Sendai Framework, is appropriate for us up to 2030, even in these times when we have such systemic and interconnected risks. I continue to think that the Sendai Framework is a very insightful document – and I owe that to my predecessor and the team that developed it before I moved into my role for UNDRR. The members states and the secretariat thoroughly reviewed and thought about the landscape of risk for the world when the Sendai Framework was created, and the risk governance framework that it proposes, is still appropriate.*

The challenge moving forward that I see exists at the national level. We would like to see an “all of government approach” in countries around the world, but we do not yet see this consistently happening. What I mean by this is that, most of the time in many governments, a National Disaster Management Agency or similarly named group exists that focuses on disaster risk and responding to disasters. These groups predominantly and historically have come from civil protection, and their forte is typically in responding to disasters – which of course they must do, with many being in constant action on this front as the frequency and intensity of disasters continues.

These groups are also responsible for disaster risk reduction. For many, it is a challenge for them to focus on this because they are very busy responding to disasters, with everything that this entails, and trying to recover and reconstruct from them. Many of them do not yet have the expertise in disaster risk reduction. They are often not sufficiently resourced and financed for it.

There is another big challenge here, which gets to the heart of exposure and vulnerability to disaster hazards, and how we act as a society. It concerns how and where we build our houses and our infrastructure; how and where we plant our agricultural products; how we teach about disaster risk in schools, and other factors. This is not a task for a single agency such as a National Disaster Management Agency. It is much broader and should be seen as a task for all ministries in government. There is a need for an integrated plan to address disaster risks at all levels and to ensure all ministries and departments take risk-informed action. This is what we see as a key challenge that needs to be addressed and tackled. For example, education on good agriculture practices that embeds disaster risk reduction is important.

The other challenge is, how can we best involve everyone in finding solutions. Governments around the world need to make sure they regularly ask themselves: “Is the process for involving different and diverse groups in developing action for disaster risk reduction working as well as it should?”

The Sendai Framework talks about the need for a whole of society approach, and it lists explicitly a wide range of non-governmental stakeholders. We talked about inclusivity earlier, and this point is about achieving this. All stakeholders need to be brought together to develop resilience plans for a country, at a national and a local level. Importantly, it is for the government to take the initiative to bring stakeholders to the decision-making table, which includes those who represent vulnerable groups including women and girls, persons with disabilities, minorities, and indigenous peoples.

These groups should be seen as people who need to be part of leadership to decide how to move forward, they should not be seen only as groups who need to be protected. This should be the case not only at the community level but at the national level too. Only when this is achieved do we see a whole of society approach. This is linked to what we call “the national platform”, which is what we advocate for. When governments make their national strategy for disaster risk reduction, there must be a national platform that includes all diverse groups and actors. I also want to mention that academia is very important for this. In many countries, although the notion of linking with academia is important, it is still not happening as well as it should.

This is what we mean when we say that we would like to see a better approach to governance at the national and local levels. This is where we need to focus.

Gareth: Thank you very much for this explanation, Ms Mizutori. I know that it takes a lot of work to make a whole of society approach to resilience work. The way you have described it makes me think of what I saw happening in the French city of Bordeaux in October 2023, when I was delighted to be there to play a small part in their “city resilience week” (“*une semaine de la resilience*”), which involved many activities including events and forums for the public to attend to debate what’s required to achieve resilience.

Ms Mizutori: *Absolutely, you are right that it takes a lot of ongoing focus and work. As I mentioned, the National Disaster Management Agencies that are tasked to develop plans and bring people together already have a lot of needs to respond to and address. In many cases they are overwhelmed. I can therefore understand why it isn’t happening as much as it should, but if it doesn’t happen, we won’t achieve a whole of society approach.*

Gareth: I appreciate that it is hard to ensure all groups of society are properly involved in disaster risk reduction planning. In our Disasters Avoided initiative we hope that we can show examples of how it is taking place, and what others can learn from these examples. This is not to say that there is “one best way”, but rather, we hope we can show ways that it can work.

I’d like to pick up on another point of Objective 2 of the Work Programme, which is about the \$26 million being allocated towards Deliverable 2.2.3 for strengthened inclusive multi-hazard early warning systems for the most vulnerable (for which I see many linkages to our discussion about systemic risk). That is more than half of the budget for the entire Objective. Why is this Deliverable important?

Ms Mizutori: *Early warning systems are key to better preparedness. If we have effective early warning systems, we are better prepared to save lives and livelihoods when an event that can cause a disaster strikes. So, you are right, this is not a prevention method, but it is of course a very important part of minimising the impact that an event can have.*

You mentioned the seven global targets of the Sendai Framework at the start of our discussion. One of these seven targets is for countries to have better multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information, so this has always been part of the Sendai Framework and part of our mandate to support member states. On 23 March 2022, World Meteorological Day, the UN Secretary General launched what is called [The Early Warnings for All initiative](#). This is a very ambitious plan to cover the whole planet with effective, inclusive, multi-hazard early warning system, which leads to early action, by 2027. UNDRR has been asked by the Secretary General to co-lead globally this Early Warnings for All System development.



Figure 1: Budget overview for the four Pillars of the Early Warnings for All Initiative

Early Warnings for All Action Plan unveiled at COP27 (Source: [UNDRR](#))

We are a global co-lead, and we are the lead agency of one of the four pillars that constitute the initiative, which focuses on understanding risk (disaster risk knowledge and management). The \$26 million that you mention is related to this pillar. Countries need to understand the risks across their geography – the hazards, exposure and vulnerability – which is the basis for an effective early warning system. I want to mention also what the other three pillars are about. The second pillar of the initiative is about forecasting and monitoring, which is led by WMO (the World Meteorological Organization). The third is about warning dissemination and communication, led by ITU (the International Telecommunications Union).

The fourth is about action on the ground, focusing on preparedness and response, led by IFRC (the International Federation of the Red Cross). This includes educating people and making sure early warning is followed by early action.

By 2027 we need to cover the whole planet with effective early warning systems. 30 target countries have been selected for focused support. 28 of these countries are Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and / or Small Island Developing States (SIDS). We are working in these 30 countries (and others), to support them to understand the risks they face and to develop their early warning needs.

The Early Warnings for All initiative is a challenging goal, as many countries face many diverse risks. Once we know the gaps they have across the four pillars that I mentioned, we will help them improve their early warning system, and we will work with international partners to help fill these gaps. This is where our \$26 million will be used.

Gareth: I can see how the Early Warnings for All initiative links to the systemic risk we discussed earlier, and the importance of understanding and unpacking all risks, knowing that different early warning responses are required for different situations. I can also see the linkage to ensuring inclusivity in solutions development that we discussed earlier, and linkages to national and local governance. I noted the current progress with this initiative, [per the 2023 global status update](#) prepared jointly by UNDRR and WMO.

Ms Mizutori: *If I may add, it is one thing to establish an early warning system, but the other major piece is how we ensure it is sustainable. Many developing countries do not have large resources at their disposal, and we need to look at what the best minimum standard is for them, one that can be ably and practically maintained with secured funding on an ongoing basis.*

5. Objective 3: Catalyse investment and action in disaster risk reduction through partnerships and engagement with stakeholders

Gareth: Funds and financing have come up a few times so far, and I'd like to hone into one aspect of this, about partnership development with the private sector in relation to Objective 3 of the Work Programme.

I have read some interesting information from UNDRR about the low proportion of funds devoted to upfront funding to reduce disaster risk.

Target c of the Sendai Framework is focused on reducing economic losses from disasters, yet they remain stubbornly high. According to [the UNDRR website page on Financing Prevention](#) for every \$100 spent on total development aid between 2010-2018, as little as 47 cents were allocated for disaster risk reduction.

Can the private sector play a greater role in investment and funding towards disaster risk reduction – with investments (not only finance, but tangible support) that can help realise socio-economic benefits? I have been discussing this with various people in the private sector, including those who work in insurance.

***Ms Mizutori:** Indeed, the private sector is a very important stakeholder group in the implementation of the Sendai Framework. You mention the insurance sector, which is described in the Framework as an important partner and contributor. Insurance, the financial sector and others in the private sector are vitally important.*

Traditionally, when we talked about disaster risk reduction or disasters and the private sector, the main focus was insurance and risk transfer as the most prominent way of getting back all or part of what people lose. We know that the support of the private sector is much more than this.

There are several roles that the private sector can play, which we can look at through several demands and needs.

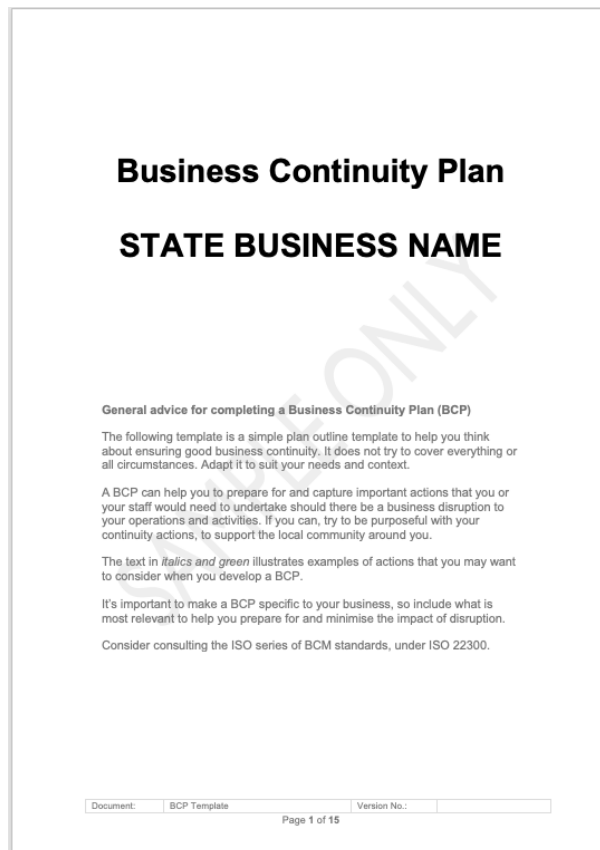
The insurance sector agrees that they need to be part of the prevention agenda. There is a lot of good work that they do, and it is important to see how they can support disaster risk reduction.

The financial sector has an important role in making sure that money is flowing towards the creation of resilience, not the creation of new risks. Many decisions that are made for investment are guided by short-term incentives, and often quick and cheap solutions which does not always lead to good resilience. Indeed, this short-term approach can lead to the creation of new risks. We need to make sure that financing models are robust, such as when to provide finance and how to introduce prevention as key criteria in climate and green bonds and the like. Importantly, any kind of financial investment should be geared towards supporting disaster risk reduction – be it through new products that are launched into the market or new services. UNDRR has established an [Investor Advisory Board](#), which is comprised of ten influential investors (you can download details about them from the IAB page on our website). The key thing is that they are all committed to exploring how the power of the capital market can be leveraged in order to deliver resilience. I am very excited about this Board because they are committed to working on this and they will be the ones that want to find a way to make it happen (with our support in any way that we can provide).

Another thing I would say about the private sector is that we need better investment in infrastructure, which incorporates public and private sector involvement. Infrastructure is the solid foundation of our resilience, or it can unfortunately become the opposite if poorly conceived. Although there is a lot of awareness around the world that infrastructure needs to be resilient, it is still not happening everywhere (for a variety of reasons). This can lead to the creation of new risks. First, it is important for governments and regulators to have robust rules and regulations around how infrastructure must be developed. Second, there must be appropriate incentives in place for the groups that develop it, and third, there must be clear penalties and punishments when the rules are not abided by. I don't think the onus for monitoring this can be entirely the responsibility of regulators.

Developers in the private sector have to understand that providing resilient infrastructure, and basic services through this infrastructure which are not disrupted, or as minimal as possible when a disaster occurs, is core to the objectives they must seek to achieve in how they develop and manage infrastructure solutions.

Another area I would like to highlight is that we know that the vast majority of what constitutes the private sector is Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs). SMEs are the businesses that are hit hardest by disasters – and many do not recover from them. It is important to think about how we can build the resilience of SMEs. Something as simple as a good Business Continuity Plan (BCP) can go a long way for them. Big companies typically have one or a set of BCPs, but what about small businesses? Many do not have one, or if they do, it is more about response rather than resilience and prevention measures. So, a third important area of focus is to support SMEs to develop good business resilience and good BCPs. I think a good way to do this is through peer-to-peer networks. For example, large companies can help small enterprises to develop good BCPs, which address pragmatic resilience and prevention as well as response.



Example BCP for a Small Enterprise (Source: G Byatt)

One of the findings of the Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework is that the private sector still sees, by and large, the Sendai Framework, resilience building and disaster risk reduction as the public sector's agenda. We need to change this mindset. We have created a forum and network for companies called [ARISE](#), but we know that it is only a relatively small group of businesses when we consider the global business picture (businesses of all types are always welcome to join it).

The Disasters Avoided initiative highlights examples of proactive action around the world to avoid disasters. 15

Perhaps we need to think about ways to incentivise the private sector to be involved in the disaster risk agenda.

We need to keep working on this area, by engaging with businesses of all sizes. I do believe that between now and 2030, working with the private sector is a crucial element for ensuring the implementation of the Sendai Framework.

Gareth: Thank you very much for these examples about private sector involvement, Ms Mizutori. I had the pleasure of speaking with some people involved in ARISE recently (for example, [with Peter Williams, the Chair of ARISE-US](#), together with Ben Reynolds), which was very interesting. I also find the public-private sector interaction model in Japan for planning towards disaster risk very interesting, and I wonder about the learnings it holds for other nations.

Your point about Business Continuity Plans resonates with me, as someone who advises businesses about them. Whilst I usually work with large businesses, I spent time with small businesses such as coffee shops in my local neighbourhood during the pandemic to discuss resilience measures and BCPs (both for the immediate pressing needs they had at the time, and longer term).

Through our Disasters Avoided initiative we are trying to play our part in highlighting the role of the private sector towards disaster risk reduction, including publishing articles in business magazines (an example from September 2023 is [available through the Institute of Risk Management's Quarterly magazine](#)), and showing how public and private sector integration can help everyone.

6. Objective 4: Mobilise governments and other stakeholders through advocacy and knowledge-sharing to make disaster risk reduction central to sustainable development

Gareth: We have talked a lot about inclusiveness, knowledge sharing and advocacy. I have two questions relating to this objective.

The first Deliverable 4.1.1 of this objective is about the centrality of disaster risk reduction to the sustainable development agenda and other global priorities. Could you explain some of the key points to this?

Ms Mizutori: *This is a very important part of our work. It is becoming clearer and clearer that disaster risk reduction and the Sendai Framework are not only about saving lives and livelihoods through its implementation. Of course, this is important, but I would say the notion and the actions related to disaster risk reduction are also central to achieving the Global Agenda.*

We mentioned briefly [the SDGs](#) earlier. Nothing erodes sustainable development like a disaster. Hard-earned development gains can be wiped away in seconds, and this is true everywhere around the world. Whilst the majority of economic losses currently occur in the developed countries. In developing countries, the percentage of losses to the whole GDP of a country is skyrocketing. This is one example of why disaster risk reduction is so essential for the SDGs to be achieved.

Consider the world's water needs, as an example. In March 2023 [the UN Water Conference was held](#). There are so many aspects to focus on with water. Water-related disasters – be it too much or too little – are statistically something like 90% of all disasters (that is not to say that other disaster types have less focus). Consider the climate challenge as another example. We must be mindful that 90% of disasters are related in one way or another to the climate emergency.

Through [the Doha Programme of Action](#) that was adopted for Least Developed Countries, there was a strong request from the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) that the system needs to embed the notion of disaster risk reduction much better. If we do not do this, LDCs cannot move economically forwards – and even if they do manage to improve and move out of the LDC group, a major disaster can set them back years. In 2024 two important conferences take place: one is for [the SIDS network](#), to adopt the successor to the SAMOA Pathway, and another is for the landlocked LDCs to adopt the successor of [the Vienna Programme of Action](#). For both categories of nations, good disaster risk reduction is crucial.

Also, [the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) was agreed in December 2022. Biodiversity loss has become a big risk driver, because it is a core element that degrades the environment. If we can work with nature, we can be more resilient.

To give you one more example, consider how we address gender equality. We have talked about groups of vulnerable people earlier in this interview. It is a fact that when disaster strikes, women and girls are impacted much more than men and boys. For all these global agendas, it is truly important for DRR to be there. I would like to share with you that with [UN Women](#) and [UNFPA](#) (the UN Population Fund), we are developing the Gender Action Plan for the whole of the Sendai Framework in consultation with a lot of countries. We are trying to embed into the whole Sendai Framework elements of gender that need to be reflected.

Through these examples, I hope it is clear that the Sendai Framework and disaster risk reduction could be considered a connecting tissue for many of the issues on the global agenda.

Gareth: I appreciate this detailed explanation and these examples, Ms Mizutori. In terms of your last point about gender equality, I recall discussions with teams such as [Engineers Without Borders Australia](#) and their work on sanitary requirements for disaster resilience on Pacific Islands. I can also see the linkages with critical infrastructure and many other aspects.

I would like to finish with your thoughts on Deliverable 4.2.3 and its focus on communications and advocacy campaigns to build resilience. How does UNDRR see the role of the media? Plus, I would appreciate your thoughts on COP28.

Ms Mizutori: *The role of media is key, and it is written into the Sendai Framework as a crucial non-governmental stakeholder. There are three roles for the media that I would like to highlight.*

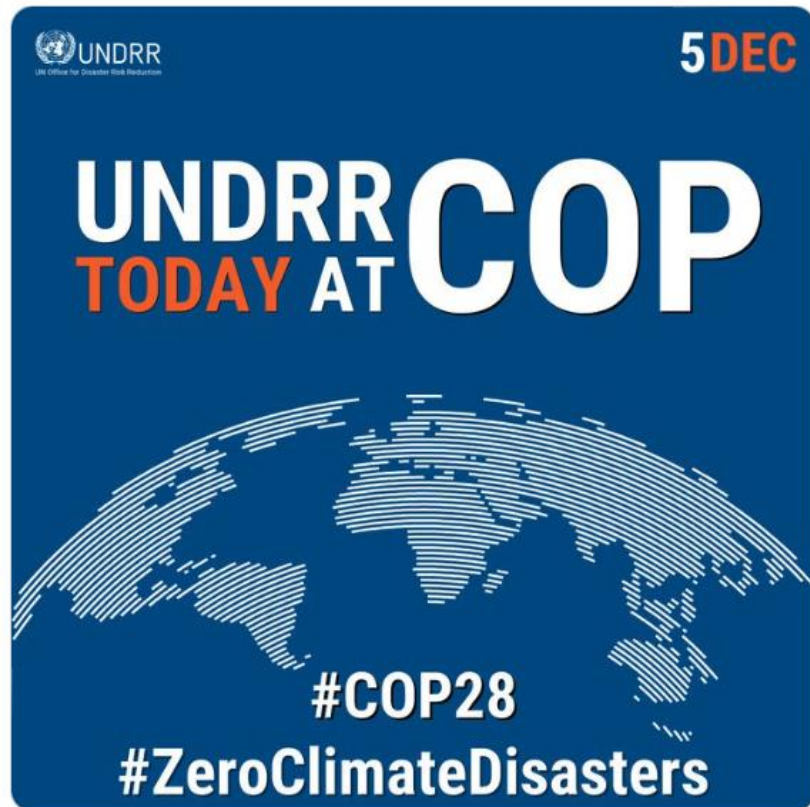
The first is helping to uphold accountability. The media can hold government accountable for whether they are truly building, applying and implementing their resilience agenda. The media needs to continue to focus on this.

The second role is highlighting and sharing risk information. The media, particularly broadcast media, can reach entire populations. Working with academia and other groups, they can publish crucial information about the hazards that exist, and importantly, what actions need to be taken for people to protect themselves. We talked earlier about early warning systems. In many countries, the media is a very important outlet that issues early warnings – through the radio, TV and other means.

The third role is the promotion of good practices and success stories. What I mean by this is – after a disaster strikes, a lot of immediate attention is given to the response effort, which I understand, and it is important. I would really hope that the media can also continue to focus on disaster prevention and reduction by talking more about good practices and success stories, and how disasters are being avoided.

On COP28, we are active. There is greater awareness that climate action, in particular climate change adaptation measures, needs to be connected with disaster risk reduction. If we do not reduce vulnerability, which is central to disaster risk reduction, we cannot fully mitigate the impact of hazards. We are becoming more focused on making this happen.

For COP28, we have a call to action called [Zero Climate Disasters](#). How can we achieve this? First, countries need to fast-track their energy transition, slash emissions before 2030 in order to slow down climate change and stop the creation of related risk. Second, countries need to deliver on climate justice by addressing existing risks. The Loss and Damage Fund is part of this, but so is helping to enhance the technical capacities of countries globally, especially LDCs and SIDS, to avert and minimise and address further losses and damages. Importantly, we need to make sure that the Early Warnings for All initiative receives full support and is rolled out, particularly the finances that are required. Third, we need to ensure there is more predictable and sustainable financing for resilient infrastructure and risk-informed adaptation, bringing in vulnerability considerations and de-risking all investments. This is what we are calling for at COP28 and we hope that the message will resonate even more than in previous years.



#ZeroClimateDisasters unveiled at COP28 (Source: [UNDRR](#))

Gareth: There is clearly a lot to do, but there is also a lot that has been achieved and is being worked on which deserves recognition. Step by step, things are happening. The points you mention about the media just now and being able to show examples of work to avoid disasters is very much aligned to our Disasters Avoided initiative. In 2024, [Understanding Risk Forum 2024](#) (UR24) takes place, and it will be interesting to see how [the Averted Disasters Award](#), that is part of UR24, unfolds.

We have covered a lot of points in this interview, Ms Mizutori. Thank you very much for your time.