

GDIN2001

CANBERRA STATEMENT 23 March 2001

Improving the flow of disaster information from those who have it to those who urgently need it

We, the participants of the GDIN2001 Conference, recognise that disasters continue to have devastating effects on people, property, and the environment. We recognise that there needs to be increased international cooperation to assist countries and regions to take advantage of accelerating developments in information technology so as to make a positive contribution in risk assessment, mitigation, preparing for, responding to and recovering from disasters.

Such cooperation requires active participation by governments and their agencies, commercial organisations, non-governmental organisations, academic institutions, learned bodies and individuals. GDIN is a politically neutral and an independent public-private partnership.

Since the inaugural GDIN Conference in Washington DC in July 1998, through GDIN Conferences in Mexico City (1999) and Ankara (2000), there has been substantial progress to make a reality the GDIN vision to ensure that the right information is provided to the right people on time in order to make the right decisions. The Canberra conference carried that vision forward.

At the Canberra Conference, we have agreed to the GDIN Business Plan, which identifies its future directions and a range of services for sharing disaster information that GDIN will implement over the forthcoming year. These services include:

- ❑ a database of GDIN participants highlighting expertise, information capabilities and contact details;
- ❑ a proposed network of disaster information specialists has been established which can respond actively to requests for information by facilitating information flow and linking users and providers of that information; and
- ❑ a GDIN internet-based system which provides effective access to national and regional information networks, and international sources of disaster information from around the world.

We recognise that a major advantage of GDIN has been the development of partnerships within the global disaster management community. GDIN will continue to pursue strategic relationships with those who have a role in improving the flow of information in disaster management. The number of organisations who have that role - government and non-government and private sector - is growing rapidly as technological advances gather pace globally.

In association with clarifying GDIN's role to facilitate information sharing, delegates gave commitment to and endorsed the principle of formalising the GDIN organisation

and agreed to pursue a strategy to attract funding from sponsors to support GDIN services.

The Conference particularly emphasised that GDIN foster the development of regional and national disaster information networks and provide the leadership and advocacy of information sharing at the national and regional levels. This had special meaning for Australia and the Asia Pacific region where strengthening the information networks is an important objective based on the understanding that many countries do not have ready access to all the technological options.

Significant achievement has been made by the Working Groups. They identified a series of tasks for the next year in support of GDIN's Business Plan. Common themes identified included initiation of activities to more closely identify and serve user needs, continue to build the people network and to pursue demonstration projects. One of these will be the development of a unique reference number for disaster events.

The Conference has congratulated Larry Roeder from the US State Department who was re-elected as Executive Director, Karen Risa Robbins as the Fund Director, and AmTech Alliances as the provider of Secretariat services.

The Conference paid tribute to the Australian Government, the Australian GDIN Conference Committee, the exhibitors and major sponsors, (the Australian Agency for International Development, the Bureau of Meteorology, and Australian Geological Survey Organisation), and to Emergency Management Australia for the organisation of a highly productive Conference.

The conference is delighted to accept Italy's offer to host the next conference - to be held in Rome in June 2002.

In conclusion, we note the real maturing of the GDIN organization, characterized by deep and more productive relationships between its members. The 2001 conference marks a watershed in this process of maturity, and provides a clear demonstration of the performance and the potential of GDIN in improving the ability of disaster managers to prepare for and cope with a very wide range of emergencies. This is especially important for countries for countries who need significant support from those who need it.

This successful Conference provides the platform for a challenging year ahead focused on implementing the Business Plan which calls for progress in many fronts including sponsorship, relations with governments, cooperative partnerships and the effective use of technology and its simple application to reduce the impact of disasters on communities in every part of the globe.