



GDIN2004 REPORT

Report on GDIN2004, March 26-29, 2004, Washington DC

A record number of nationals from 57 countries attended the sixth GDIN conference in Washington DC. The conference opened in the Loy Henderson Auditorium at the US Department of State followed by sessions at the Hilton Alexandria Mark Center in Virginia. Among the 208 participants were 10% from academia, 40% from government, 12% from international organizations, 12% from NGOs, 6% from industry and 20% from other smaller groups.¹

Continuing the approach of GDIN2002 in Rome, experts in infectious diseases held specialist sessions. For the first time, a delegation of Native American representatives attended. In collaboration with the University of Alabama and the US Department of Defense, a workshop was held on high-performance computing in disaster mitigation. Students in a Disaster Studies program at the George Washington University acted as session rapporteurs. Also of assistance for conference administration were students selected by the Governor of Virginia and the Loudoun County school system for their high scholarship.

Sessions during the conference covered the following themes:

Animal disease	High-performance computing
Communicable disease control	Homeland security and terrorism
Disaster mitigation	Infectious diseases
Early warning	Knowledge management
Earth observation and remote sensing	News and media
Education and training	Regional cooperation
Emergency communications	Tampere Convention
Extreme emergencies	Wildfires
Famine	Unmanned aerial vehicles
GDIN information facilitator service	

The expansion of subject areas beyond those in previous conferences was welcomed as the GDIN approach is widely applicable.

Information Facilitator Service

It was **agreed** with the Native American delegation to pursue the possibility of a pilot program for the GDIN Information Facilitator Service, in part facilitated by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the US Departments of Interior and State, and the National Science Foundation. The aim of this service would be to support coordination of disaster assistance and risk reduction by Native American authorities by linking national and

¹ Statistic to be refined by Larry Roeder on his return to Washington.

international infrastructure sources. This could promote a common framework for information sharing within indigenous peoples by addressing the digital divide that exists between these often-remote populations and the computer-literate world.

If successful, this project will serve as a prototype to develop the Information Facilitator Service concept further for other vulnerable communities that lack an information infrastructure. These, in turn, would become GDIN Information Facilitator Service nodes forming a backbone network to support the service around the world. Representatives of Canada and South Africa have already expressed interest in a joint venture.

The National Congress of American Indians will be invited to facilitate the process. In addition, various Native American nations formed a GDIN Standing Committee and elected a chair to be a member of the GDIN Executive Committee.

GDIN also **agreed** to work with the US Department of the Interior, the National Congress of American Indians and the Standing Committee on Native American Disaster Information Issues in order to make a presentation at a UN meeting on indigenous populations in New York in the spring of 2005

UAV Working Group

The Technical Applications and Analysis Center of New Mexico State University offered to form a GDIN Working Group to facilitate the accommodation of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) in civil airspace for disaster management. This proposal was **approved**.

UN Working Group on Emergency Telecommunications

The representative of the UN Under Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs confirmed that the UN Working Group on Emergency Telecommunications will continue to act as GDIN's Telecommunications Working Group. This advice was **accepted** with pleasure.

United States Support

GDIN is a voluntary, independent, self-sustaining, non-profit association. Nevertheless, its continuation as an effective forum depends on support from many sectors.

The conference delegates **noted** with pleasure the encouragement given to the role of GDIN during presentations at the Opening Session, on March 26, by United States officials from the US Department of State and the US Agency for International Development.

It was **agreed** that continuation of this support will encourage GDIN to pursue the development of its initiatives and conduct of conferences.

World Conference on Disaster Reduction Kobe-Hyogo 2005

A United Nations World Conference on Disaster Reduction is to be held in Japan 18-22 January 2005. The outcome of the conference is expected to:

- increase the international profile of disaster risk reduction;
- promote integration of disaster risk reduction into development planning and practice; and
- strengthen local and national capacities to address the causes of disasters that continue to devastate and impede the development of many countries.

The World Conference will focus on Knowledge Exchange as one of its three main processes through parallel events on specific thematic issues and good practices.

Participants in GDIN2004 **recommended**, and the GDIN Executive Committee **agreed** to pursue actively, inclusion in the World Conference of a session stream sponsored by GDIN and to **seek** to send a delegation as an NGO.

Chair Election

At GDIN2001 in Canberra, Alan Hodges of Australia was elected Chair of the GDIN Executive Committee. He did not seek reelection at GDIN2004.

Dr. Albert Simard was elected as the new Chair of the GDIN Executive Committee.

Relevance of GDIN Theme

The GDIN theme is:

*The right information, in the right format, to the right people,
in time to make the right decisions.*

Notwithstanding the rapid advances in information and information management since GDIN was established, a consistent message of presentations and discussions throughout the conference was the continuing relevance of the GDIN theme to all phases of disaster management.

GDIN2004 participants **supported** the need for GDIN to conduct conferences and undertake programs to support the primary GDIN goal of increasing awareness of the importance and value of disaster-related information and best practices for its management.

Global Unique Disaster Identifier Number

The Global Unique Disaster Identifier Number (GLIDE), first proposed by the Asian Disaster Reduction Center, Kobe Japan, at the 2000 GDIN conference in Ankara Turkey, is now being implemented. GDIN **endorses** GLIDE and will use the system in appropriate activities.

Next GDIN Conference of Disaster Experts

Beyond the pursuit of GDIN participation in the World Conference in Kobe in January 2005, it was **agreed** that GDIN should conduct its next international conference in 2006. Participants called on GDIN to also enhance participation by key humanitarian relief NGO's.

The Swiss Federal Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research SLF has offered to host GDIN2006 in Switzerland in March 2006 in conjunction with a conference of The Global Alliance for Disaster Reduction. This offer will be followed-up by the GDIN Executive Committee.