

The Rosersberg Initiative Newsletter

Issue One

October 2008

Welcome to The Rosersberg Initiative Newsletter !

With the eighth meeting of international Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies (AGEE) to be held from 6 to 8 May 2009 in Brussels, this newsletter has the objective of providing members of the AGEE with updates on progress of the Rosersberg Initiative, undertaken at the seventh meeting of the AGEE in June 2007 in Sweden. The Initiative, aimed at strengthening international preparedness and response to environmental emergencies, consists of three Thematic Areas, namely, TA1: Advocacy and Capacity-Building; TA2: Strengthening International Governance Systems; and TA3: Operational Aspects of Providing and Receiving Assistance. This first issue of the Newsletter focuses on two major efforts aimed at improving international response capacity: the Environmental Assessment Module, and the pilot Environmental Emergencies Training, both of which were launched in August in The Hague.

The Environmental Assessment Module

We are pleased to report the unveiling of the Environmental Assessment Module (EAM), an innovative mobile laboratory developed by the Netherlands within the framework of the International Humanitarian Partnership (IHP) to support international response to environmental emergencies. The EAM was officially inaugurated by the Dutch Ministers of Environment and Development Cooperation. Among those also making remarks at the launch were Gerhard Putman-Cramer, Chief of OCHA's Emergency Services Branch, and Christophe Bouvier, Regional Director for Europe of UNEP.

"I wish to extend heartfelt thanks to the Netherlands for their long-standing commitment to supporting our endeavour to respond even more rapidly and effectively," said Putman-Cramer. "In doing so, they continue to set an important example for the international community, and raise the quality standards for international response to humanitarian and environmental crises around the world."

The EAM can be rapidly deployed for disasters involving hazardous substances, together with the relevant technical expertise and two fully-equipped off-road vehicles: one containing a mobile measurement and analysis unit, the other containing materials for logistical support, such as satellite equipment and GPS. The entire EAM can be transported in a cargo aircraft. However, being a modular unit, equipment relevant to a given emergency can be selected and deployed individually.

When deployed, the EAM will be supported by a knowledge network of research institutions and Ministries in the Netherlands to ensure affected countries receive the best available support.

The EAM will be used to assess effects of environmental disasters. It will mainly be deployed in countries that lack the specialist knowledge or capacity needed to deal with environmental disasters.

The development of the EAM is a joint initiative of the Netherlands' Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, following recommendations by the international Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies. Its development and deployment over a five-year period involves a commitment by the Netherlands of €1 million.



Part of the EAM, a generous contribution to international environmental emergency response by the Government of the Netherlands.

The EAM can be deployed at the request of the UN or other international organizations. Countries themselves may also directly request assistance from the Netherlands. A primary client of the EAM will be the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit (JEU). The first “deployment” of the EAM took place during the recent biannual Triplex disaster simulation, held in Sweden and Norway in mid-September.

Environmental Emergencies Training

The Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit (JEU), integrated into the Emergency Preparedness Section of the Emergency Services Branch of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), was proud to launch the pilot Environmental Emergencies Training in mid-August in The Hague, the Netherlands. It was designed in close collaboration with the Crisis Management Department of the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment; the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and the Swedish Rescue Services Agency (SRSA).

A comprehensive curriculum -- covering a wide range of issues such as the UN response system to natural disasters, environmental emergencies, personal mission preparedness, information management, stress management, and cultural awareness -- was developed to ensure participants of the training would be mission ready.



Participants and trainers in the pilot Environmental Emergencies Training held from 18-22 August in The Hague, the Netherlands.

The 35 participants in the course, which ran from 18 to 22 August, expressed great satisfaction with the training, and provided valuable feedback. Based on this, the curriculum and methodology are being reviewed by the Steering Committee in order to determine the most appropriate means of rolling out a generic Environmental Emergencies Training, which will contribute greatly to the overall objective of strengthening the international environmental emergency response system, as well as enhancing the resilience of vulnerable countries. The importance of this initiative cannot be overemphasized, and appreciation is hereby extended by the JEU to all countries, organisations and individuals that have been, and continue to be, involved in the process of developing the training.

Save the Date !



AGEE Chairman Chris Dijkens at AGEE 7

The Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies (AGEE) is planning to hold its 8th meeting from Wednesday 6 May to Friday 8 May 2009 in Brussels, co-organized with the European Commission's Monitoring and Information Centre. The AGEE is an international forum that brings together environmental specialists, disaster managers, and emergency policy makers from around the world to share information, expertise and lessons learned to improve preparedness and response to environmental emergencies. We hope to see you there!

Best regards,
Chris Dijkens
Chair, AGEE