

# Environmental Emergencies Forum

The Environmental Emergencies Forum (EEF) is a biennial global meeting that brings together stakeholders from around the world to improve preparedness, response and overall resilience to environmental emergencies. The Forum provides a unique opportunity to create partnerships, to improve, international governance, share experiences and build capacity.

## Environmental Emergencies

An environmental emergency can occur following a disaster or conflict when human health and livelihoods are threatened and affected on a major scale due to the release of hazardous substances, or because of significant damage to the ecosystem. Examples of such emergencies include oil spills, toxic waste dumping, and groundwater pollution, when the environmental risks are acute and potentially life threatening.

## Objectives

- Provide an open forum to exchange experiences and knowledge;
- Facilitate partnerships to improve environmental emergency preparedness and response;
- Identify current environmental risks, challenges, and priority actions in the field of environmental emergencies;
- Serve as a platform for networking and partnership



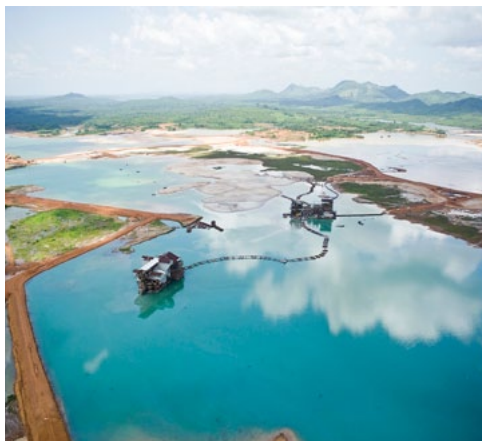
*“ Promote international cooperation to better prepare for and respond to environmental emergencies, while advocating for the integration of environmental concerns into humanitarian action ”*

## Expected outcomes

- Awareness among participants, international stakeholders and the global community of the risks, challenges, and priority actions associated with environmental emergencies;
- Commitment to strengthen international cooperation on preparedness and response to environmental emergencies;
- Support to developing national and regional capacities to prevent, prepare for, and respond to environmental emergencies;
- Commitment to integrate environmental concerns into humanitarian action.

Forum discussions will inform the Strategic Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies, who advise the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

## 2015 Environmental Emergencies Forum



### The 2015 Forum will take place in Oslo, Norway, 5-7 June.

2015 is a landmark year. New global commitments to Sustainable Development Goals will begin. The World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction will be held in Sendai in (DATE) to launch the successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action. The 2015 UN Conference on Climate Change (COP 21) may facilitate the adoption of a new international climate agreement, applicable to all member states after 2020.

With increased urbanisation and more frequent extreme climate events, the risk of environmental emergencies is increasing. Preparing for environmental emergencies helps reduce disaster risk and promotes sustainability. The 2015 Forum outcomes should also inform the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit.



## Participants

The Forum welcomes approximately 200 representatives involved in the field of environmental emergency preparedness and response, as well as humanitarian action. The forum will be open to all stakeholders with an interest in lessening the harmful impacts of environmental emergencies. Participants should include representatives of UN member states, UN agencies and programmes, regional organizations, humanitarian actors, disaster management and environment authorities, academia and research facilities, private sector, and industry groups. EEF participants will have the opportunity to organise individual sessions. **Registration opens in January 2015.**

## Main topics of discussion



### Environmental Emergency Response

For more than 20 years the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit has been mobilising experts and equipment to respond to environmental emergencies. Relying on a strong international network of partners, experts and equipment, such as mobile laboratories, are mobilised immediately following the request for international assistance from an affected country. Teams can conduct rapid assessments, test for the presence of hazardous materials, analyse the possible effects on communities, and help national authorities develop strategies to respond.

Recent developments in response tools, systems, trainings and guidelines will be presented. Based on recent environmental emergencies, this session will analyse best practices and identify areas for further improvements in the response to environmental emergencies.



### Environmental Emergency Preparedness

Rapid urbanisation and industrialisation are placing increased pressure on communities and the environment they depend upon. The impacts of climate change, extensive resource use and lack of regulatory oversight, can lead to environmental emergencies - with catastrophic consequences for communities, livelihoods and ecosystems. Anticipating and preparing for these types of emergencies demands a pro-active and holistic approach from national environment and disaster management authorities. This theme will look at the application of the Environmental Emergency Risk Index (EERI), which seeks to identify various elements that contribute to increased vulnerability. Sessions will inspire practitioners to take a holistic view on disaster preparedness - incorporating climate change adaptation and technological hazards in a comprehensive approach - as well as member state representatives who want to share best practices on bringing disaster and environment communities closer for better preparedness.



### Environment in Humanitarian Action

The findings of the study "Environment & Humanitarian Action – Increasing effectiveness, Sustainability and Accountability" (June 2014) indicates an urgent need to address issues related to leadership and accountability. At the same time, it calls for greater technical support at the field level. The study further identifies an important opportunity for donors to play a catalyst role by explicitly including environmental considerations in their funding decisions. This theme will look into what has changed and what actions various stakeholders have taken to strive for environmental sustainability in humanitarian action. Not only will we look at good practices from different countries and organizations (and how to adapt these more broadly) but also where we continue to fail, and why so. This theme will be of particular interest to humanitarian donors, field practitioners, cluster lead agencies and representatives from both environmental, and humanitarian organizations.

## 2015 Green Star Awards

Winners of the 2015 Green Star Awards will be recognised at the EEF. The Green Star Awards recognises leaders in the fields of preparedness, response, and environment and humanitarian action. A joint initiative between Green Cross International (GCI), the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the Green Star Awards increases awareness of environmental emergencies by drawing attention to efforts made to prevent, prepare for and respond to such emergencies.



## The Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit

The Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit (JEU) assists member states in preparing for and responding to environmental emergencies by coordinating international efforts and mobilizing partners to aid affected countries requesting assistance. By pairing the environmental expertise of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the humanitarian response network coordinated by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the JEU ensures an integrated approach in responding to environmental emergencies. The Environmental Emergencies Centre (EEC) ([www.eecentre.org](http://www.eecentre.org)) is an online tool designed to build the capacity of national responders to environmental emergencies developed by the JEU.



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