

**International Disaster and Risk Conference IDRC Chengdu 2009
Wangjiang Hotel, Chengdu, Sichuan Province/ China**

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

Closing Ceremony, Wednesday 15 July 2009

By Walter J. Ammann, President GRF Davos

*“Gain new knowledge by reflecting the existent one and you will become a teacher for
the others.”
(Confucius 551 -479 BC)*

About 250 Chinese and international specialists participated in this year's regional IDRC, commemorating the first “anniversary” of the devastating Wenchuan earthquake, which occurred on May 12, 2008. As a consequence, 70'000 people have been killed, 20'000 are missing, left 15 Mio people homeless, and resulted in an economic loss of about 150 bn US\$. A lot of secondary hazards were initiated, like e.g. the barrier lakes induced by huge and numerous landslides as the most dangerous, secondary threats for many millions of people.

IDRC Chengdu 2009 has been promoted by UN-ISDR, UNESCO, EU-JRC, the Harbin Institute of Technology HIT, the Sichuan University in Chengdu, the Beijing Normal University, the University of Hong Kong, the Forum of Disaster and Social Management of the Central Committee of China Democratic League, the Chinese Ministries for Water Resources, for Civil Affairs, for Work Safety, the China Earthquake Administration, Harbin People's Government, and many other organizations and institutions.

The conference has been hosted by the GRF Asian Research Center of the

Harbin Institute of Technology, the Sichuan University, Chengdu and the Sichuan Earthquake Administration.

IDRC Chengdu 2009 provided the strategic platform for in-depth discussions on how to cope with earthquakes and other disasters and provided the necessary framework for the international risk and disaster management community to share with the Chinese colleagues in a variety of plenary and parallel sessions the valuable experiences on the devastating Wenchuan earthquake. The goal of the conference was to look ahead and to discuss best practices on how to cope with risks, on how to prevent or at least reduce disasters, to be able to develop and improve adequate strategies and efficient approaches, and to promote capacity building for the sake of a more risk resilient, safer, harmonious and sustainable world.

The conference revealed how important a human and community based approach is in preparedness, response, relief and recovery. Awareness rising and capacity building becomes crucial for a successful coping with risks and potential disasters. An impressive success story has presented about the city of Zigong, a city which anticipated the RADIUS project and which suffered substantially less damage compared to other cities due to a consequent preparedness and capacity building process over the last 10 years. By a number of presentations, it also became obvious how important social services are in an emergency relief phase, and that earthquake rehabilitation has to be seen as substantial part of rural safety and as such of a sustainable development process. Once more, the importance of an integral risk reduction and disaster management approach has been manifested. The importance of information technologies for a successful emergency response has been broadly discussed and valuable insight was provided by the Chinese experts and knowledge has been shared on the successful interventions at the

numerous barrier lakes, which were urgently necessary within a few days after the earthquake.

IDRC Chengdu 2009 revealed the importance of an international experience sharing. The valuable experiences of the Chinese experts and people will help the international risk and disaster community to contribute to a sustainable, harmonious world and to be better prepared for future catastrophes. Remembering Confucius's words "*Gain new knowledge by reflecting the existent one and you will become a teacher for the others*", it is hoped that all conference participants returned back home as future teachers in their respected fields of activity.

Walter Ammann

Honorary Chairman
IDRC Chengdu 2009