



**December 8, 2004**  
**For immediate release**

**Internationally renowned experts in water and disasters  
featured presenters at ICLR workshop**

TORONTO, ONTARIO – The Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction's London campus is bringing together some of the world's leading researchers, policy and decision-makers for its highly anticipated International Workshop: Water and Disasters, on Monday, December 13, and Tuesday, December 14, 2005.

Nearly 100 participants from across Canada and international centres such as Germany, Venezuela, Japan, Australia, Austria, Nigeria, France, Ghana and Jamaica will share knowledge and expertise about international, national and local initiatives aimed at minimizing the negative impacts of water-related disasters. High power presenters include representatives of UNESCO, International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), UN University and other international and national organizations responsible for mitigation of water-related disasters.

Dr. Slobodan P. Simonovic, Chair, Engineering at the Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction, and conference host said, "ICLR is pleased to have such a notable gathering of international experts at our event such as Dr. Andras Szollosi-Naggy, Deputy Director General of UNESCO and participants from three major UN organizations. The goal of the conference is to jointly produce a document which I will present to a World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan in January 2005."

In addition conference participants will produce an analytical report to address conclusions relevant to the international and Canadian context with recommendations as to what actions should be taken in Canada and internationally.

During the last decade, more than 2,000 water-related disasters occurred globally. Asia and Africa led the pack with floods accounting for half of these disasters. The economic cost of water-related natural disasters, especially in developing countries where they often cause water-borne and vector-disease outbreaks, is considerable. The very poor, the elderly, women and children are worst affected. As more and more people live on marginal land, there is increasingly greater risk from flooding or drought.

Paul Kovacs, Executive Director, ICLR said, "2004 is the International Year of Water Disasters. Worldwide, there is a shortage of effective disaster preparedness and mitigation methods. Appropriate risk-mitigation investment, and the redirection of resources into prevention offers significant benefits as well as reduction in loss of life and personal property."

Globally, the number of water-related disasters (floods and droughts) has more than doubled since 1996. Climate change and increasing climate variability almost assuredly means that the risk of water-related hazards will prevail. In fact the world will be facing more severe water-related events more often meaning that proactive disaster risk management strategies will become an increasingly important part of prevention activity worldwide. The documents generated by the International Workshop on Water and Disasters will go a long way toward shaping international strategy and action.

The workshop, to be held at the Spencer Conference Centre in London, has received support from the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, International Hydrological Programme of UNESCO, the United Nations University, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the International Flood Network, the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, Infrastructure Canada and Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada, and the University of Western Ontario. Presenters will be available for media interviews.

Established in 1998 by Canada's property and casualty insurers, ICLR is an independent, not-for-profit research institute based in Toronto and at the University of Western Ontario in London, Canada. ICLR is a centre of excellence for disaster loss prevention research and education. ICLR's research staff is internationally recognized for pioneering work in a number of fields including wind and seismic engineering, atmospheric sciences, water resources engineering and economics. Multi-disciplined research is a foundation for ICLR's work to build communities more resilient to disasters.

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