At the last Consultative Group (CG) meeting in Jakarta it was agreed that the outgoing and current co-chair, Australia and the Netherlands, would consult further on the governance issue with a view to present a proposal for discussion at the 12th CG in Washington.

With the Jakarta discussion in mind and using the reaction of CG members to the Jakarta follow-up e-mail, Australia and the Netherlands tried to identify the specific challenges in the current CG structure and options to address these challenges. With this document we would like to present our findings to you in preparation for an open discussion during the 12th CG.

The Secretariat is recognized and commended for its active role in CG coordination. Likewise the World Bank Chair is commended for providing leadership to the strategic dialogue between GFDRR and its members. The governance options outlined in this paper focus on the role of the co-chair and complement the role of the Secretariat and that of the World Bank Chair, in coordination among CG members and donors. The options in this paper leave the responsibilities of the Consultative Group, its members and the Chair as defined in GFDRR’s partnership Charter adopted in 2010 unchanged. The paper thus elaborates the role of the co-chair as laid down in the partnership charter and as further described in the GFDRR paper on the roles and responsibilities of the co-chair. The options in this paper are therefore designed to better facilitate and guide the dialogue amongst the diverse GFDRR partners to ensure GFDRR moves forward stronger and better situated to implement its mandate of building resilient communities and reducing vulnerability to natural hazards, while strengthening the inclusive nature of the CG.

A discussion on the Results Management Council (RMC) falls outside of the scope of this paper. The GFDRR Secretariat has kindly offered to share information about the RMC to the co-chair and CG members in due course for a possible discussion in the future.

Our impression is that members do not see a need for major reform of the CG’s membership, structure or processes and want to retain reasonably informal meetings where members are free to express their views. However, members also want to ensure that meetings of this now quite large Group result in well-informed and effective decisions. It appears that the growth of the CG is in itself an asset. However, we need to manage the consequences of that growth in membership: how can we be more effective in our guidance to the GFDRR and decision making processes?

Governance options

More pro-active co-chair role with support from former and future co-chairs

One way to advance this may be for the CG to mandate the co-chair to reach out to all members in between meetings (with support from the former and future co-chairs if the task were too large for the co-chair alone). This would enhance the capacity of the co-chair to solicit views and provide feedback to and from the Secretariat and it would also improve coordination and continuity between successive co-chairs.

Before and after CG meetings the co-chair (with support from the former and future co-chairs as appropriate) could approach members to sound out issues and give them an opportunity to express their views – much like they did before and after the Jakarta meeting last year. In this way the co-chair can inform the GFDRR Secretariat of members’ views and work with the Secretariat to ensure that members’ concerns are addressed in preparations for meetings and in agenda items for decision making.

1 For reference of CG members we have attached the description of the roles and responsibilities of the co-chair as prepared by the Secretariat in 2011.
If certain issues require a more in-depth discussion and the task to consult views on these issues were too large for the co-chair alone a division of labour could be made between the former, current and future co-chairs) to make sure specific concerns benefit from the input of interested CG members.

Ideally future, present and past co-chairs would be representative of CG membership but this depends on expressions of interest in taking on the position of co-chair throughout the Group. Every member with an interest in CG issues would be very welcome to step forward and engage actively with the co-chairs (past, present and future). This structure would enhance the co-chair’s capacity to interact with members and to make sure topics get the in-depth attention they need to lead to successful decision making at CG meetings.

*Working Groups*

An alternative option to a more pro-active co-chair with support from the former and future co-chairs would be the formal establishment of one or more CG working groups. This would require a substantive investment of time and expertise from working group members. It would also require a change in the formal governance structure.

*Work streams*

Another option could be the establishment of work streams, a more informal alternative to working groups. A work stream could be tasked by the chairs with a particular topic of interest to the CG. This would, as the working group option, require members to invest considerable time and expertise. Merging the three co-chairs option and the work stream option is also a possibility: if the three co-chairs need help from other CG members, interested members could step forward to form a work stream to be tasked with a topic of particular interest to the CG.

*12th CG meeting*

Both the Netherlands and Australia would very much welcome your views on these governance matters during the 12th CG meeting in Washington. We would specifically welcome your feedback on whether you feel we have correctly captured outstanding governance challenges and if there are options we have not considered. If there is enough support within the CG we would like to aim for endorsement of the more pro-active co-chair structure at the 12th CG.