

Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction through International Conferences

ICHARM has actively contributed to the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction through international conferences, including hosting and presenting sessions at various international conferences such as the World Water Forum and the Asia-Pacific Water Summit, and in particular, hosting the 9th International Conference on Flood Management (ICFM9) in February 2023, the second such conference held in Japan.

a) World Water Forum

The World Water Forum (WWF) is one of the world's largest international conferences on water, held every three years and co-organized by the World Water Council, an international NGO, and the host country. It brings together a wide range of water-related stakeholders from around the globe to discuss issues such as water-related disasters, sanitation, governance and finance from multiple perspectives. WWF consists mainly of an open forum accessible to all participants, ministerial conferences attended by government representatives, and a large exhibition on water.

Since 2016, ICHARM has participated in the following two WWFs.

○WWF10 (May 2024, Bali, Indonesia)

WWF10, held under the overarching theme “Water for Shared Prosperity,” brought together approximately 64,000 participants from 160 countries. ICHARM served as the theme coordinator for Theme 3, “Disaster Risk Reduction and Management,” one of the six themes in the Thematic Process. Within Theme 3, five topics were established – integrated flood management, drought management, eco-disaster risk reduction, climate-resilient water infrastructure, and early warning for all – and a total of 22 sessions were organized to address these topics individually, in combination, or in connection with other themes. After the sessions concluded, an integrated session was held, in which all theme coordinators summarized the outcomes of their respective discussions, and the results for Theme 3 were presented at the plenary.

Executive Director KOIKE Toshio and four other ICHARM researchers delivered presentations in sessions related to climate change and disaster risk reduction, sharing research findings from ICHARM.



Photo 1,2 Presentation by Director KOIKE at the integrated session, Report at overall session

○WWF8 (March 2018, Brasilia, Brazil)

WWF8, held under the overarching theme “Sharing Water,” drew more than 120,000 participants from 172 countries. On March 19, a special session titled “High-Level Panel on Water and Disasters,” organized

by HELP, was convened. In this session, Executive Director Koike presented global actions on water and disasters, including the “Alliance of Alliances on Disaster Risk Reduction Researches.”

Another special session, “From the 7th to the 8th World Water Forum: Three Years of the Implementation Roadmap,” was held on March 21. In WWF7, ICHARM served as the Champion for one of the key theme of the Thematic Process, “Adapting to Change: Monitoring Risk and Uncertainty for Resilience and Disaster Preparedness,” playing a central role in organizing sessions and synthesizing discussions.



Photo 3,4 (Left) Presentation by Director KOIKE (Right) Presentation by Chief researcher IKEDA

b) ICFM9

The International Conference on Flood Management (ICFM) is held every three years to discuss various issues related to floods and to achieve significant academic and cross-disciplinary changes. ICHARM/PWRI hosted the 9th International Conference on Flood Management (ICFM9) at National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS), and the Tsukuba International Congress Center in Tsukuba, Japan, on February 18-22, 2023 in collaboration with two partner organizations of Japan, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism and the GRIPS. The high-level symposium was held at the GRIPS on Feb. 18, and the 4-day conference was held in Tsukuba. It has been 12 years since ICHARM hosted the 5th ICFM in Tokyo, Japan, in 2011



The 4-day conference in Tsukuba was attended by a total of 394 flood experts from 41 countries and area (212 from Japan, 100 from Asia, 78 from the rest of the world, including four unknown). It was consisted of four plenary sessions and 24 parallel sessions, with 143 oral presentations in the parallel sessions and 48 poster presentations. And five special sessions were also held on cross-cutting themes, and eight companies and organizations participated in the technology exhibition to show their unique services and technologies related to flooding. In addition, a public symposium, “Can You Survive Unexpected Floods?” took place on the afternoon of the first day.

The following sections summarize the conference.



Photo 5 Group photo by all participants

The opening ceremony began with Professor Slobodan Simonovic, the chair of the ICFM Ad Hoc Committee, who delivered opening remarks on behalf of the organizers. He was followed by Dr. FUJITA Koichi, the president of PWRI, which hosted the conference, and Mr. OKUMURA Yasuhiro, the director of the National Institute for Land and Infrastructure Management (NILIM). Finally, Mr. IGARASHI Tatsuo, the mayor of Tsukuba City, welcomed participants on behalf of the host city. After the greetings, Professor Emeritus of Yamanashi University TAKEUCHI Kuniyoshi was awarded the ICFM Lifetime Achievement Award by ICFM. Professor KOTANI Motoko, the executive vice president for research of Tohoku University, Japan, and the vice president of the International Science Council, delivered the keynote speech online entitled “The responsibility of science, entrusted to us by society.”

Technology Exhibition took place in the multi-purpose room, which was also used for participants to have lunch and breaks. Eight private companies had booths to show their unique services and technologies related to flood management. Poster Indexing and Poster Viewing were held for poster presentations on the first and second days of the conference. At the closing ceremony on the final day, Mr. KUSANO Shinichi, the deputy director-general of the Water and Disaster Management Bureau, MLIT, gave the keynote speech, followed by the presentation of the ICFM9 Erich Plate Best Student Poster Award by Professor Simonovic. Next, ICHARM Executive Director KOIKE Toshio presented the draft Statement of ICFM9 to the participants and passed a little torch symbolizing the succession of ICFM to Professor Simonovic. Then, Professor Simonovic and Professor Kovacs, the executive director of the Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction (ICLR), announced that ICLR will host ICFM10 in summer 2026.



Photo 6 “ICFM Lifetime Achievement Award”



Photo 7 “ICFM9 Erich Plate Best Student Poster Award”

On the afternoon of the 21st and 22nd, site visits were conducted with the cooperation of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), the National Research Institute for Earth Science and Disaster Resilience (NIED), and three local river offices of MLIT's Kanto Regional Development Bureau. Blessed with nice weather, ICFM9 completed its four-day schedule successfully.



Photo 8 Little “Torch”

For more detailed reports, please visit the websites of ICHARM and ICFM as follows;

- <https://www.pwri.go.jp/icharm/publication/pdf/2023/4441.pdf>
- https://www.pwri.go.jp/icharm/special_topic/20230219_21_icfm9.html
- ICFM: <https://www.icfm.world/ICFM-Conferences/ICFM9>

c) Asia Pacific Water Summit (APWS)

APWS is held to provide heads of government and other top-level policymakers in the region with an opportunity to set a course for sustainable development from the perspective of water, while sharing concrete actions, solutions, and new approaches. APWS is organized by the Asia-Pacific Water Forum Secretariat, with the first summit held in Beppu, Japan, in 2007, and the second in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in 2013.

The third APWS was held in Yangon, Myanmar, from December 11 to 12, 2017. On the afternoon of the 11th, ICHARM co-hosted a session titled “Water and Disasters under Climate Change: From Mountains to Islands” with ICIMOD, SPC, and HELP.

The first part of the conference featured keynote speeches by high-level leaders, including José Ramos-Horta, the senior minister of Timor-Leste (former president and recipient of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize), and ISHII Keiichi, the MLIT minister of Japan. The second part consisted of country reports from seven Asia-Pacific nations on water and disasters under climate change. The third part was devoted to a panel discussion co-chaired by KOIKE Tosiho, the executive director of ICHARM, and Kyaw Moe Oo, the director general of Myanmar's Department of Meteorology and Hydrology.

On the afternoon of the 12th, IKEDA Tetsuya, a senior researcher of ICHARM, presented a report on the outcomes of the co-hosted session, followed by the adoption of the Yangon Declaration at the closing ceremony.



Photo 9 Japan's MLIT Minister Ishii making a keynote speech



Photo10 ICHARM Executive Director Koike (first from left) speaking during the panel discussion

The fourth APWS was held in Kumamoto City, Japan, from April 23 to 24, 2022. ICHARM was responsible for planning and managing the Thematic Session “Water and Disasters/Climate Change,” the Special Session “Showcase,” and the Integrated Session “Science and Technology,” as well as coordinating and compiling the outcomes. In particular, in response to the request made by the heads of state in the Kumamoto Declaration regarding the role that science and technology should play in transdisciplinary decision-making, ICHARM played a pivotal role in consolidating discussions on promoting water-cycle confluence, fostering facilitators, and advancing end-to-end approaches, contributing to the preparation of the Chair’s Summary.



Photo 11 ICHARM Executive Director Koike serving as the moderator of the Special Session “Showcase”



Photo 12 Participants at the Science and Technology Integration Session