

Global Agenda Council on Catastrophic Risks 2012-2014



Understanding/Context

Catastrophic events have demonstrated the impact they can have on economies and lives. Although they may be unpredictable, some are certain to occur again: future avian flu virus epidemics could have a bigger impact than the global pandemic of 1918 because of the dramatic increase in travel; the cascading effects of the 2011 earthquake in Japan demonstrated the interconnected vulnerabilities of supply chains; and the 2007 financial crisis resembled that of the 1930s.

Technology has evolved to build resilience but is also fertile ground for new catastrophic risks such as man-made ecological shocks and the impact of cyber-, bio- and nanotechnologies. The fragile geopolitical nuclear age may not be new, but could result in an unprecedented catastrophe.

The complexity of a single catastrophic event and its impact on the economy, geopolitics, the environment and the way we live are not well understood. Public-private collaboration, involving experienced practitioners, thinkers, influencers, decision-makers and funders, is essential for building effective resilience to catastrophic risks.

The Global Agenda Council on Catastrophic Risks is ideally placed and equipped with the reputation, access and framework to bring together and lead influential stakeholders from the private, public and academic sectors in a transformation process that can help prevent catastrophic events from happening, as well as develop early-warning systems and build resilience to those that cannot be avoided.

Shaping the Agenda

The Council is building opportunities for experience-sharing and broader consideration of resilience, not only on the initial consequences of a catastrophic event, but also on other aspects of government, society and the economy. The Council is conducting activities to address these concerns and to generate new opportunities by:

- Creating and providing case studies for the “Leading Practices Exchange”, a database and assessment process it helped develop
- Designing and co-hosting a series of workshops for leaders and experts from different sectors to explore how partnerships help build resilience, encourage network building and influence the global agenda through strategic engagement initiatives with governments and United Nations agencies
- Analysing catastrophic risks as complex systems to develop tools and frameworks for assessing them
- Developing a framework to assess the exposure and resilience of countries to different sorts of catastrophic risks

“Public-private collaboration is essential for building effective resilience to catastrophic risks”

The Council will produce an executive summary of the predominant themes and consolidate the lessons learned from the different types of catastrophic risks. Additional network and partnership events are planned to take place in Geneva, Abuja, Manila, London, India and Japan. The next phase of national resilience assessment activities will be to test and define the questions and data sources. The work will also produce timely opinions on catastrophic risks as they occur.

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