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## Students get chance to contribute to global disaster debate

**A group of Northumbria students have contributed to the United Nations' plans to prevent future global disasters by attending an international conference in Geneva.**

The four MSc and two PhD students, all from the University's [Geography department](#), were part of a delegation invited to Switzerland as part of Northumbria's Organising Partner role for the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR). It was the first time a student-led delegation had attended. The event saw more than 900 delegates come

together from the world's leading public, private and academic organisations working on Disaster Risk Reduction (DDR) and marked the launch of the UNISDR Science and Technology Partnership and the Science and Technology Road Map to 2030.

[Professor Andrew Collins](#) said: "Of particular significance on this occasion was that while Northumbria staff and affiliates are veterans of helping steer global policy on disaster risk reduction, this was the first time there was a specifically flagged student-led delegation to champion their perspectives, this being unprecedented within the strategy to date.

"The United Nations organisers have highly welcomed the approach giving very positive feedback, and in relation to which there will be inevitable follow up in the years to come."

Alongside other delegates, Northumbria students and staff were able to contribute to global decisions and strategy on the use of science and technologies in Disaster Risk Reduction. When the strategy was first launched more than a decade ago, Northumbria was the only UK academic institution to operate with UN partner status. Since then, other UK institutions have followed Northumbria's example and signed up to provide support, with this number predicted to grow significantly between now and 2030 following the World Assembly of Nations meeting in Sendai, which made research, science and technology one of its central pillars for reducing future disaster risk. Northumbria had also played a significant role in various aspects of this main 2015 agreement now referred to globally as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The latest Northumbria delegation to Geneva was one of the larger and most well established representations from the UK with contributions on multiple fronts, including the Northumbria Student Union-led Disaster and Development Society (DDS), the Disaster and Development Network (DDN) and DDN Health Centred Disaster Risk Reduction (HCDRR) initiative now also championed by the World Health Organisation in consort with other UN bodies.

One of the students who travelled to Geneva was PhD researcher Mark Ashley Parry, who is also President of Northumbria's Disaster and Development Society. He said: "The Disaster and Development Society was invited to

attend the UNISDR Science and Technology Conference by its Vice-Chair Virginia Murray.

“As a society, we felt it was a great honour to be invited by Virginia and we are hugely grateful to both her and Professor Andrew Collins, who has guided us at every step. During the conference, we had the great opportunity to give a presentation to all delegates that attended. The response that we received was great, and there was a lot of intrigue in the role that our society plays in promoting the Youth Voice in Disasters.

“It was truly heartening that policy makers, practitioners and academics were really interested in our approach to spreading the understanding of disasters to young people and giving them a voice about disasters. Overall, as a group, we came away from the conference with an increased interest in our subject and it has encouraged us to talk about what we have learnt and to continue spreading the message of disaster risk.”

Northumbria’s research into Disaster and Development has been ranked among the top 20 most impressive examples in the UK for its contribution towards global development. Of the 6,975 impact case studies submitted to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) – the system that is used to assess the research quality of all UK universities – judges from a group representing 14 Government Departments and Research Councils UK singled out work by the Disaster and Development Network (DDN) at Northumbria.

Since its foundation at Northumbria in 2004, the DDN has been researching and facilitating the implementation of disaster risk reduction strategies to improve community resilience in some of the world’s poorest communities. Researchers from the University worked with communities in Bangladesh, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan and Zimbabwe to gauge ideas and perspectives on the risks they face. For more information visit: [www.northumbria.ac.uk/ddn](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/ddn)

Northumbria’s contribution to this field is supported through its global MSc and doctoral alumni and annual Dealing with Disasters conference. The University offers a range of courses in Geography with the department ranked Top 30 in the UK based on research power following the results of the Research Excellence Framework 2014. Disaster and development research and teaching at Northumbria has also recently lead to it being elected as one of three Europe wide groups to represent Europe and Africa in the recently formed Global Alliance of Disaster Research Institutes (GADRI) hosted for its



initial phase by Kyoto University, Japan and with an initial 91 member institutions from around the world, and similarly is a leading member of a new UK national research network for implementing the UK research strategy for the Sendai Framework. To find out more about studying at Northumbria go to: [www.northumbria.ac.uk/geography](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/geography)

To find out more about the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) Science and Technology Conference on the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) 2015-2030 <http://www.unisdr.org/partners/academia-research/conference/2016/>

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If you have a media enquiry please contact our Media and Communications team at [media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk) or call [0191 227 4571](tel:01912274571).

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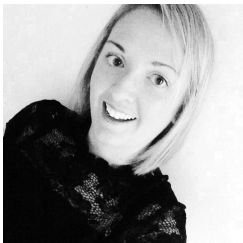
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