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'Disaster effects in parallel'

collapse in the world's economy would have exactly the same impact on New Zealand as a nuclear war in the Northern Hemisphere, an environmental scientist said in Dunedin yesterday.

Dr Wren Green, of the Department of Conservation, told a group of world experts attending an international symposium on

conflict resolution that the recent downturn in the global economy pointed to an urgent need for a contingency plan against the possibility of massive social disruption caused by such a collapse.

"It would be the same as the catastrophic effect of a nuclear war," he said. "We have been misled by Northern Hemisphere thinking into believing that the main effects will be billowing

clouds of radiation.

"There will be some radiation effects, but the main effects will be psychological and social."

Dr Green, leader of a team of three set up by the New Zealand Planning Council to study the effects on New Zealand of a nuclear war, said the country was as vulnerable economically to a world depression as it was to a nuclear war.

"The more sophisticated we get, the more vulnerable we get," he said. "There is no Government contingency plan in the event of a nuclear war in the Northern Hemisphere." The possibility of a complete cessation of trade with the north had enormous implications for New Zealand.

"That would certainly happen in a nuclear war." — NZPA