

Comments by UN-Habitat

General comments:

All human settlements will continue to face a multitude of shocks and stresses associated with natural and manmade hazards and threats, including economic losses from global price shocks, political instability, crime, disease, as well as the adverse impacts of climate change. Tackling and preparing for these and other plausible threats demands a forward looking, holistic approach to resilience building. The HFA-2 Priority 4 must emphasize forward-looking actions and approaches to both preparedness and recovery/reconstruction build resilience to a multitude of shocks and stresses, with an explicit recognition of the inter-connected nature of multiple layers of risk across physical, spacial, functional, organizational and economic scales.

The growing concentration of people and assets in cities means disasters are affecting more urban dwellers with increasingly harmful consequences for employment, housing and critical infrastructure, such as roads, power and water supplies. Rapid urbanization in hazard prone areas demands immediate attention.

The twin challenges of unsustainable development patterns and the rising impacts of disasters are further exacerbated by the significant gap in funding between emergency response and prevention/resilience. Currently, less than 0.7 per cent of total relief aid goes to disaster risk reduction/resilience, with donors spending \$160,000 on emergency response for every \$1 spent on DRR. A fundamental paradigm shift is needed to break the *disaster-response-disaster* cycle. Resilience principles and approaches must be fully integrated into all re-development and development plans, regulations, and investments.

Some 60 per cent of the area expected to be urban by 2030 remains to be built. By 2030, an estimated \$25- \$30 trillion will be invested in new infrastructure, including urban road construction, water and sanitation, energy and transport systems, and buildings. It is expected that roughly \$700 billion a year will be spent on financing new urban infrastructure in low- and middle-income countries over this period. The HFA-2 presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to safeguard future urban landscapes and investments, as well as encourage sustainable, equitable growth. Priority 4 can go further in highlighting the importance of well-planned urbanization as a mechanism to avoid creating new layers of risk, including in post-crisis reconstruction phase, as well as facilitating socially and economically inclusive societies.

The actions needed to address the multiple risks that are uniquely urban in context are broadly outlined in the 10 Essentials of UNISDR's Making Cities Resilient Campaign. In 'localizing' the priorities of the HFA, the 10 Essentials have shone a spotlight on the importance of reflecting cities' needs and challenges in international and national level policies and frameworks, thus helping to pave the way for the set of post-2015

international agreements. The HFA-2 must go further than its predecessor to reflect the social, economic and environmental dynamics of the new urban era.

The HFA-2 must help ensure that future development patterns avoid the pitfalls of the previous generation of urbanization. Uncontrolled urban growth of the past 30 years has largely resulted in crowded slums and sprawling settlements on the city fringe. Cities are consuming land at an alarming pace, increasingly, to accommodate new developments. The projected expansion in urban land cover between 2000 and 2030 is in the range of 56-310 per cent (source: IPCC 5th Assessment Report, Working Group III). In some regions, urban land has grown much faster than the urban population, resulting in less dense and, in general, more inefficient land use patterns. In addition, this is often happening in the absence of a viable spatial structure. Pressure on land also results in increased land prices and consequent occupation of marginal land by slums or leapfrogging development with urban sprawl.

Policies and investments that foster environmentally and socially sound land use planning and design must be at the core of national and sub-national disaster risk reduction strategies. Likewise, local authorities must be empowered to adequately prepare for risks confronting their cities and communities, for example, through the provision of information/data and platforms that support the exchange of information and best practice. Further, their authority must be backed up with adequate human and financial resources to monitor and communicate changes to the risk landscape, assess progress, and withstand and recover quickly when crises do occur.

Suggested language to relevant paragraphs is provided in tracked changes below:

3. Over the same 10-year time frame, however, disasters have continued to exact a heavy toll. Over 700 thousand people lost their lives, over 1.4 million were injured, and around 23 million were made homeless as a result of disasters. Overall, more than 1.5 billion people were affected by disasters in various ways. The total economic loss was more than \$1.3 trillion. In addition, between 2008 and 2012, 144 million were displaced by disasters. Disasters are increasing in frequency and intensity, and those exacerbated by climate change are significantly impeding progress toward sustainable development. The first decade of the 21st century also ushered in the era of the city, when the global population living in urban areas surpassed 50 per cent, thus making urban centres the dominant habitat of humankind. Globally, 80 per cent of the largest cities are vulnerable to severe impacts of earthquakes, and 60 per cent are at risk from storm surges and tsunamis, and all face new impacts of climate change. Evidence indicates that exposure of people and assets in all countries and urban areas has increased faster than vulnerability² has decreased, thus generating new risk and a steady rise in disasters losses with significant socio-economic impact in the short, medium and long term, especially at the local and community level. In urban areas, unsustainable development patters, inadequate or non-existent building codes and regulations, limited governance capacities, poor planning, and other factors are contributing to the rising incidence and costs of urban disasters and marginalization of poor and vulnerable communities. Because the infrastructure of informal settlements and other poor communities are generally of low quality and built in highly exposed areas, such as coastal zones and flood-prone planes, the vulnerability of these populations, including to the effects of climate change, is increased by an order of magnitude. Recurring small scale, slow-onset and extensive disasters particularly affect communities, households and small and medium enterprises and constitute a high percentage of all losses. All governments — especially those in developing countries where the mortality and economic losses from disasters are disproportionately higher — and businesses are faced with increasing levels of possible hidden costs and challenges to meet financial and other obligations.

The security of people, communities and countries may also be affected.

5. There has to be a broader and a more people-centred preventive approach to disaster risk. Enhanced work to address exposure and vulnerability and ensure accountability for risk creation is required at all levels. More dedicated action needs to be focused on tackling underlying risk drivers and compounding factors, such as [rapid urbanization](#), demographic change, the consequences of poverty and inequality, weak governance, inadequate and non-risk informed policies, limited capacity especially at the local level, poorly managed urban and rural development, declining ecosystems, climate change and variability, and conflict situations. Such risk drivers condition the resilience of households, communities, businesses and the public sector. Moreover, it is necessary to continue increasing preparedness for response and reconstruction and use post-disaster reconstruction and recovery to reduce future disaster risk.

8. Overall, the HFA has provided critical guidance to reduce disaster risk. Its implementation has, however, highlighted gaps in addressing the underlying risk factors and in the formulation of goals and priorities³ for actions and the need to update and reorder them. [Among these gaps is the recognition of the role of cities and local governments in both contributing to the creation of new risk, as well as providing solutions that reduce underlying risk factors.](#) It also highlighted the need to give the necessary visibility to all levels of implementation, and place emphasis on stakeholders and their role.

National and local levels

22. It is important to:

- a) Establish baselines and [standards and](#) periodically assess disaster risks, including vulnerability, exposure and hazard characteristics, at the relevant spatial scale, such as within a river basin and along coastlines;
- b) Systematically survey, record and publicly account for all disaster losses and the economic, social and health impacts, [including disaggregated data on the impacts of disasters in urban areas](#);

Priority 4: Enhancing preparedness for effective response, and building back better in recovery and reconstruction

30. The steady growth of disaster risk, including the increase of people and assets exposure, [particularly in rapidly urbanizing areas in developing nations](#), combined with the learning from past disasters, indicate the need to further strengthen preparedness for response at all levels. Disasters have demonstrated that the recovery and reconstruction phase needs to be planned ahead of the disaster and is critical to building back better and making nations and communities more resilient to disasters.
National and local levels

31. It is important to:

- a) Prepare or review and periodically update disaster preparedness and contingency plans and policies at all levels, with a particular focus on preventing and responding to possible displacement, and ensuring the participation of all sectors and stakeholder groups, including the most vulnerable, in the design and planning, [including in urban](#)

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| areas/settlements;

| h) Promote the incorporation of resilience practices and principles into disaster risk management and into post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation processes and use opportunities during the recovery phase to develop capacities that reduce disaster risk in the medium term, including through the sharing of expertise, knowledge and lessons learned.

Global and regional levels

32. It is important to:

| b) Promote the further development of standards of resilience, including codes and other guidance instruments to support effective preparedness and response strategies that enable communities and economies to withstand and recover quickly from crises and maintain continuity of services, ~~as well as~~ contribute to the lessons learned for policy practice and reconstruction programmes;

