

Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction
14-18 March 2015, Sendai, Japan

**MINISTERIAL ROUND TABLE “Reducing Disaster Risk in Urban Settings” –
SUMMARY REPORT FOR THE PLENARY MEETING ON 15 MARCH**

Session: Ministerial Round Table “Reducing Disaster Risk in Urban Settings”
Chair: H.E. Pravin Jamnadas Gordhan, South Africa
Time and Date: 16 March 2015, 15:00-18:00

President of the Conference,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

Participants highlighted the multitude of challenges in addressing urban risk, many of which are exaggerated by a changing climate and the rapid pace of urbanization. Noting that most urbanization will take place in developing countries, across Asia and Africa, participants recognized the additional challenges both national and local governments will face.

Participants acknowledge urbanisation and related exposure is growing faster than anticipated. To effectively address these risks, there is a need to further develop and consolidate key actions. The following measures were highlighted as ways to address urban risks through the implementation of post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction:

- National and local governments need to cooperate and establish stronger urban policies to reduce the concentration of economic opportunities and public services. Local governments need the tools and financing to implement risk-informed decisions;
- Building codes, standards, rehabilitation and reconstruction practices at the national and local level need to be revised or established, as appropriate, to ensure applicability in local contexts, particularly in informal settlements. Reinforcing the capacity to implement, survey and enforce codes can directly fostering disaster-resilient structures and sustainable buildings. The use of innovative or traditional techniques was recognised;
- Informal settlements, many that are in high risk areas, should be upgrade based on risk-informed interventions and with the involvement of all sectors and in particular community groups;

- Disaster risks need to be periodically reviewed, assessed and communicated to ensure existing, emerging and new sources of risks, vulnerability and exposure are understood. Educating citizens and business on risk should be prioritised.
- Local government officials' roles and responsibilities should be defined and their capacity strengthened to support their full engagement with stakeholders. Regulatory frameworks provide important guidance to stakeholders;
- Land-use policy development and implementation must be informed by disaster risk assessments, risk maps and risk data. Factoring anticipated demographic and environmental change into urban planning is critical to managing future risks.
- International and regional cooperation provides an important additional layer of support to local governments. Existing regional centres can be used to enhance collaboration.

Participants emphasised the importance of taking a people-centred approach to urban development. The poor and vulnerable suffer the most and face the highest risks. This can only be addressed by reducing inequality.

Participants agreed that while legislative frameworks are important, effective implementation remains the paramount challenge. Disaster risk is not a theoretical or abstract concept and must be addressed through practical and targeted measures at the local level.

* * * * *