RECONSTRUCTING AFTER DISASTERS: BUILD BACK BETTER
Ministerial Roundtable

CONCEPT NOTE

BACKGROUND

The Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction will be held from 14 to 18 March 2015 in Sendai City, Japan. The Conference aims to complete the assessment and review of the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), adopt a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction, and identify modalities of cooperation based on commitments to implement the new post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction.

The sessions at the World Conference will represent an accumulation of experiences gained on the implementation of disaster risk reduction shared, for example, during the extensive consultations on a post-2015 framework; at the Global and Regional Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction; and at relevant international gatherings like the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, in 2012. The Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction will build on existing and successful partnership as well as to launch innovative and concrete new ones, and will include five Ministerial Roundtables including one on “Reconstructing After Disasters: Build Back Better”.

CONTEXT

The experience of disaster recovery and reconstruction interventions has been a mixed one. While governments have implemented large-scale recovery and reconstruction programmes in the wake of a number of major disasters over the past decade, these programs are meeting challenges that differ among countries but also, it has shown, have many similarities. While the experience of recovery is somewhat better documented and shared, the reconstruction is still an area that will benefit from more international cooperation.

It is assumed, based on trends over the past decades, with increasing wealth, with growing urban areas, that the need for skills, expertise and consolidated knowledge about reconstruction planning and implementation, is needed.

This Ministerial Roundtable aims to share some of these experiences of reconstruction, give focus on common issues and challenges, identify ‘little known or unknown’ issues, and to result in a continued work. It is envisaged that much work can be done to plan and anticipate issues that are common and shared among all reconstruction operations. By beginning to build a more consistent and shared knowledge base and systems for learning, countries and communities will be better prepared for future reconstruction programs.

Some examples of common challenges and gaps are, defining policy frameworks and enabling mechanisms support on a consistent basis, timeframes for reconstruction,
institutional responsibilities (local, regional and national), financing instruments, engagement and consultations with individual and communities for the reconstruction planning, with the ambition of reconstruction for improved safety, what should the policies and parameters be. Fundamental social and economic issues, such as aiming for relocating communities/or industries from highly exposed/dangerous locations for better safety is an underpinning goal but a challenging one.

Typically, the local economy through the physical destruction and social impact, will be severely affected. How can the reviving of the local economy and markets, with employment be stimulated and a priority?

Reconstruction programs risk creating exclusion and favoring specific groups unless carefully designed and monitored.

This roundtable invite presentations of national experiences and will discuss successes and difficulties with the aim to share learning and ensure that a solid base of guidance can be created for how to plan and implement reconstruction and avoid the most common risks that are consistently present.

**TIMING AND VENUE**

The Ministerial Roundtable “Reconstructing After Disasters: Build Back Better” will be held in Meeting Room 1 & 2 of the Sendai International Centre on 15 March 2015, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**PARTICIPANTS**

Each roundtable will have 45 participants. Each participant may be accompanied by one adviser. States will select one roundtable to attend at the ministerial level (up to 40 from Government delegations), and at least five other invited participants, (from representatives of entities of the United Nations system, accredited intergovernmental organizations, and major groups). Each of the five UN regional groups will be invited to nominate a Chair. States and other participants are encouraged to be represented at the roundtables at the highest possible level.

Any given State, observer, entity of the United Nations system or other accredited intergovernmental organization or representative of a major group may participate in only one of the roundtables. Each participant may be accompanied by one adviser.

The list of participants in each roundtable will be made available prior to the meeting.

**OBJECTIVES**

Each Ministerial Roundtable will provide an opportunity for interactive and focused discussions on key priorities, commitments and actions in support of the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction, as it relates to recovery and reconstruction after disasters to build back better.
GUIDING QUESTIONS

The roundtable discussion will be guided by the following questions:

1. How can past experiences better inform future implementation?

2. How can reconstruction be linked to broader development goals and strategies?

3. How can reconstruction be made more socially inclusive and non-discriminatory?

4. How can a continued work of this Roundtable help accelerate learning?

STRUCTURE

Each Chair of a roundtable will be appointed by the President of the Conference from among the ministers attending the Conference in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical distribution and taking into account invitations for nominations to be extended to the Chairs of regional groups.

The Chair, with support from DGACM, will moderate the roundtable. Interventions shall not exceed three minutes. Participants will raise their name plate to request the floor. Interpretation in six UN languages will be available. Each roundtable will be webcast.