

**Joint UN Statement on
Section D: Priorities for action, national and local context
With a focus on environment and technological hazards, early warning, and capacity
building and resourcing for DRR**

**At the Informal consultative meetings on the post-2015 global framework on disaster risk
reduction, 09 October 2014, Geneva**

Excellencies, distinguished Member State representatives, and colleagues,

The UN system wishes to express its appreciation to the honourable Co-Chairs, Bureau Members and to all Member States for the continued opportunity to participate in the Informal Consultations. On behalf of my colleagues, we hope the following Joint UN Statement will contribute to the acceleration of disaster risk reduction efforts at national and local levels, through well-defined and effective Priorities for Action.

This statement builds on the previous Joint UN statements that have been delivered in the Informal Consultations, and is in line with the UN Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience.

Our message echoes previous Joint UN statements calling for:

- Elevation of resilience as an overarching goal;
- Comprehensive risk management;
- An all-hazards approach;
- Multi-sectoral integration;
- Evidence-based decision making; and
- Focus on the most vulnerable and contributing to their empowerment,

as guiding principles in determining the Priorities for Action in the successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action.

We wish to elaborate further on the Priorities for Action in order to deliver comprehensive disaster risk management and achieve sustainable, resilient development.

Focus on environment and technological hazards

The UN system welcomes the clear recognition already accorded to environmental considerations in the pre-zero draft, as a basis for reducing underlying risk factors and for building resilience of communities and countries. This said, the UN would like to further strengthen the pre-zero draft by elaborating on concrete measures to be considered under the Priorities for Action. Environmental considerations should be viewed as a cross-cutting issue across the Priorities for Action as part of understanding risk; strengthening risk governance; investing in social and economic resilience; and preparedness for response, recovery and reconstruction.

The pre-zero draft recognizes sustainable ecosystems management under Section D, Investing in Social, Economic and Environmental Resilience. This is most welcome and

reflects current knowledge and growing practice, by placing greater emphasis on sustainable ecosystem management as a basis for building resilience. Indeed, healthy, well-managed ecosystems play an important role in reducing disaster and climate risks and in contributing to the overall social and economic resilience of communities, providing for their livelihood, food, energy and water security.

We identify 4 main action points:

1. Further guidance should be provided to Member States and other major stakeholders, by citing specific examples of existing environmental instruments and ecosystem management approaches that could be utilized for disaster risk management.¹ These include, for instance:

- River basin management; integrated coastal zone management; integrated water resource management, including transboundary cooperation; wetlands management and protected areas management.

We can cite many examples from many countries around the world where ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction is already being put into practice.²

2. The pre-zero draft emphasizes the integration of disaster risk reduction in development and sectoral policies and plans. This integration can be made more tangible by promoting the use of environmental impact assessments (EIAs) and strategic environmental assessments (SEAs) that factor in disaster risk in planning public and private investments. Environment impact assessments are already practiced in most countries and are a tool for development and land-use planners to anticipate, avoid and mitigate potential health, social and environmental impacts that result from development activities. Disaster risk can be readily factored into the EIA process, which would assess the potential impacts of hazards on proposed investments; or conversely, assess the potential of creating or exacerbating disaster risk as a result of the proposed investments. Several countries, such as India, the Philippines and more recently the EU, have passed legislation to incorporate disaster risk as part of EIA implementation.

3. We also would like to stress the importance of adopting an all-hazards approach to disaster risk management, including societal, geological, hydro-meteorological, technological and biological hazards such as epidemics and pandemics. However, most risk reduction efforts, including in policies, risk assessments and capacity building, have focused on natural hazards exclusively.

¹ These ecosystem-based measures have been endorsed in the Outcomes of Regional Platforms of Asia, Africa, Latin America and Arab states, the European Ministerial Meeting on DRR, as well as in previous Global Platforms held in Geneva. These measures are also supported by several multilateral agreements, namely the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention), UN Convention on Biological Diversity, UN Convention to Combat Desertification, the UNFCCC Nairobi Work Programme and UNFCCC Cancun Agreements, as well as the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.

² Refer to the Partnership for Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction (PEDRR) Inputs paper on HFA2 found in the WCDRR Preparatory Committees web page (<http://www.wcdrr.org/preparatory/viewsandcomments>) or go to www.pedrr.org

4. Technological and industrial hazards in particular should be given greater attention in the successor to the HFA, recognizing the clear trend of increased industrialization, urbanization and population movements. As the Gulf of Mexico oil spill and the Fukushima triple disaster have shown, technological disasters can also have significant health, social, economic and environmental consequences. Natural hazards can furthermore trigger technological disasters, and magnify impacts, potentially affecting multiple regions and countries.

There is a need to strengthen technical and scientific capacities at local, national and regional levels to assess and manage risk resulting from industrial and technological hazards, integrate technological hazards in national DRR policies, develop adequate preparedness to respond to environmental emergencies, and mainstream risk reduction in industrial and infrastructure development, including in EIA processes.

In order for environmental priorities to materialize into effective action, environmental actors - including Ministries of Environment- can and should play a stronger role in disaster risk reduction. But their sustained engagement will require an enabling policy and implementation framework. Private sector involvement, particularly from trade, tourism, insurance and industrial sectors, is considered essential, not only to mitigate environmental risks but also to implement environmental management solutions that reduce risk.

Focus on Early Warning

The UN system welcomes the clear recognition already accorded to Early Warning Systems (EWS) in the pre-zero draft, as a basis for effective preparedness and response planning at all levels. We would like to see the document further strengthened by suggesting additional language for consideration under the Priorities for Action.

The Hyogo Framework for Action is unequivocal on the integral role of early warning systems in disaster risk reduction. Country experiences in the past decade have shown the effectiveness of early warning systems and services in reducing mortality from weather-, climate-, and water-related hazards, in spite of the continued increase in economic losses in many areas. These gains need to be sustained and further enhanced through a multi-hazard approach, especially in the context of increasing exposure and vulnerability and the uncertainty of natural hazard extremes exacerbated by climate change. Multi-hazard early warning systems are life-saving tools and are an integral part of disaster risk reduction.

We identify 5 main action points:

1. There is a need for a standardized, integrated and holistic approach in the assessment of risks at national and local levels³, based on accessible and regularly updated data on natural, technological and biological hazards, exposure, the different components of vulnerability, capacities across sectors and losses to disasters, in order to support science- and evidence-based decisions in tackling multiple and “cascading”⁴ hazards. Disaster risk assessments

³ See also, UN Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience, Action 1.3.

⁴ « Cascading » hazards is a term used to refer to different hazards that occur and interact simultaneously, potentially magnifying hazard impacts. The Fukushima triple disaster in 2011 is one such example.

should then serve as a basis for establishing multi-hazard early warning systems that are tailored to users' needs, including social and cultural requirements.

2. The issuance of early warning is a national responsibility that involves numerous actors at various levels. Hence, the roles and responsibilities of public and private sector actors and stakeholders who are implementing and benefitting from multi-hazard early warning systems need to be clarified and reflected in national to local regulatory frameworks, planning, budgetary, coordination and operational mechanisms.

3. National technical agencies, such as the meteorological, hydrological, geological, and marine services, play a crucial role in collecting and analysing hazard and risk information. Their collaboration with other actors in disaster management is important to ensure optimal use of information and available technical expertise in-country.

4. Multi-hazard early warning systems in countries should be complemented by regional cooperation frameworks, given that particular hazards may overwhelm national capacities and have transboundary impacts.

5. In order to make effective multi-hazard early warning systems a reality, there is a need for additional investments in hazard observation networks and monitoring of disaster losses. Maximizing opportunities provided through Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for multi-hazard early warning is key. ICTs facilitate monitoring of the environment, retrieving and processing vital data, disseminating information before, during and after disasters. ICT plays a crucial role in monitoring, detection and prediction of hazards and their impacts. ICTs are vital for bridging last mile gaps in information dissemination. Such investments should not only include "hardware" requirements but also investments in human capacities to develop, operate and maintain such systems.

Focus on capacity building and resources

The effectiveness of any country's disaster risk governance largely depends on the risk management capacities of individuals and institutions at the national and local level. The successor to the HFA should therefore make capacity development a core aspect of its structure, its goals, targets, indicators, and especially its implementation. It should clearly articulate three interlocking perspectives of capacity:

- The enabling environment, such as legislation, institutional arrangements, leadership, political support, and incentives;
- The organisational level, such as policies, strategies and action plans, that allows organisations to deliver on their mandate; and
- The individual level, the skills and knowledge vested in people.

Capacity development should therefore be treated as a cross-cutting theme across all aspects of the successor to the HFA. Specific aspects of capacity development should include:

- Developing management and technical skills, which in turn strengthens the knowledge, abilities, skills and activities of key actors;

- Requiring sustained support rather than quick-fix solutions (as a long-term, strategic process);
- Adopting a systems approach, taking into account the dynamics and inter-relationships across issues and actors;
- Recognizing that capacity for risk governance is not just about 'government'. Risk is governed across and between sectors, from national to local levels, and by many actors, including the international community.

The international community, as noted in the pre-zero draft, has a role to play in developing capacities with a view to foster national leadership and ownership. It is recommended that future drafts articulate more clearly how such support shall be provided.

A final comment about resources - The reduction of disaster risk does not come without cost. To build such capacity as indicated above, for example, takes time, effort and investment. This does not necessarily mean inflated budgets for ministries of disaster management, but it would certainly mean larger investments in risk-related areas across and between sectors, and through national and local level plans. Future drafts of the framework should articulate:

- The importance of national commitment to risk reduction through finance.
- The financial processes and practices through which governments translate commitments to reduce disaster risk.
- The role that the private sector plays through its considerable investment, which is not primarily motivated by reducing disaster risk.
- A much broader picture of how DRR can be financed through different sources, for example through development funds or through climate financing.

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