Major Group Science and Technology
19 Sept 2014
Statement to Joint Session made by Anne-Sophie Stevance, Julie Calkins and Virginia Murray

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment and for an interactive session yesterday; welcome the opportunity to engage with members states and UN agencies

We commend the Co-Chairs for a balanced and comprehensive document in this historical context where post-2015 agenda can foster transformation beyond resilience to sustainable development. The draft acknowledges the importance of science and its ability to provide evidence, technology and data to inform DRR/M activities as well as to underlie the proposed monitoring system.

To fully contribute to DRR decision-making at all levels including by national and local governments, business, and local communities, science must be recognized for its full potential to support evidence-based decision-making.

1-The nature of science: All that science can be and do

Science is about understanding, science is about generating knowledge in a rigorous and verifiable fashion, it is about casting an impartial and objective lens to identify trends and issues. But it is also about problem-solving, supporting the design and the implementation of solutions. Science in its broad sense, encompasses natural, economic, health, social sciences, and engineering, produce and on data, draw on knowledge from practitioners and local communities.

Science can:

- Help to develop critical insights into understanding underlying risk factors
- Help assess risks, vulnerability as well as economic, social and environmental impacts of disaster.
- Help explore options to mitigate, prevent, and manage risks.
- Help develop metrics, methodologies and frameworks to monitor progress towards risk reduction and resilience building
- Help to build capacity to manage and communicate risk, and best practice for reducing exposure

Despite many advances in science, impacts of natural and human-induced disasters continue to increase. Science can only fulfill its potential to benefit societies by enhancing collaboration with governments and key actors to identify the critical questions that need to be answered, and co-produce knowledge and suitable solutions that can effectively support decisions and actions.

In this process to develop the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction, we have been trying to learn from experience in HFA, mobilise scientific and research communities working on DRR, and listen to needs from members countries and major groups.

2-What countries have said they need

Consultations on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda and on the disaster risk reduction (DRR) agreements have seen the global science community, governments and

international agencies[1,2] call for a better mobilization of science and technology to disaster risk reduction efforts.

Key messages have emerged including:

1. As mentioned by many speakers, knowledge management standards, data access and monitoring at all levels, and the sharing of science-based risk information
2. As well as technology transfer, innovation and provisions for continued technical support once applied.

Additionally ongoing consultations with Member States to align Science and Technology to Countries' priorities for HFA2 and implementation challenges have shown that:

72% of member state respondents feel that their country does not currently have access to sufficient science and technical information and capacity to inform DRR/M policy and practice. A similar percentage feel that the requirement/need for S&T presents a national challenge to the implementation of HFA and DRR policy.

Hence there is a strong case for greater S&T engagement that can significantly benefit local and national at risk population, policy actors, and economies.

3-The Draft

Our overall suggestions for the pre-zero draft are that it takes into account

Education and capacity building. Greater priority should be put on sharing and disseminating scientific information and translating it into practical methods that can readily be integrated into policies, regulations and implementation plans concerning disaster risk reduction. Education on all levels, comprehensive knowledge management, and greater involvement of science in public awareness-raising and education campaigns should be strengthened.

Integration- We would like to support member States and other Major Groups calls for HFA2 to be human-centred, for meaningful engagement across scales and sectors, for integration to be a guiding principle for the new framework, and also taking an integrated approach to interconnected risks, to better understand and manage cascading effects.

-including to Better connect early warnings to practitioner communities and users of information, including through developing a better understanding of how people respond and how decision-making process work.

-Mobilization and developing working collaborations across different actors, particularly encouraging young local scientists in co-designing and co-producing the science that better address needs on the ground, and mobilizing resources to support these collaborations.

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[1] Statements that have called for greater role of science and access to science-based evidence for DRR from: European Ministerial Meeting and Regional Platform Meetings in Africa, Asia, the Americas, and the Pacific. Countries included in the following networks: ASEAN, CELAC, League of Arab Nations, and CARICOM. Angola, Australia, Bahamas, Cook Islands, Cuba, Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, G-77 and China, Gabon, Gambia, Germany, India, Indian Ocean Commission, Indonesia, Italy, Jamaica, Madagascar, Myanmar, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand, Tonga, Trinidad Tobago, Uganda, West African States, Zambia, United Kingdom. As well as the Major Group on Business and Industry, Major Group on Women

[2]The national and union membership at the ICSU General Assembly (GA) in Auckland August 2014 agreed to to work closely with UNISDR and other international and intergovernmental bodies to integrate scientific knowledge and assessment into decision-making and actions related to disaster risk reduction, and to invite individual ICSU National Members to actively encourage their governments to support the proposed intergovernmental disaster risk assessment process. With this in mind, ICSU will:

- advocate the establishment of intergovernmental/ international science advisory and assessment mechanisms for DRR which will provide scientific advice, evidence and information to support countries implementation of DRR and resilience building by countries and non-state actors at all levels (community, national, regional and global), and identify needs for additional scientific evidence.
- produce a synthesis of current, integrated disaster risk science, which will be available to inform the WCDRR meeting in Sendai and act as a review of the state of the art of DRR research (to feed into to the international science advisory and assessment mechanisms and to inform a future co-designed research agenda for DRR).

-Further develop the architecture for local level data collection on vulnerability, loss and connect up the vast amount of data and information that actors and institutions hold, so that it can be effectively used in decision-making by public and private sectors actors in a timely manner.

Transformation- The post-2015 framework for action in general, and the priorities for action in particular should fully recognize that DRR and recovery are opportunities to enhance sustainable and equitable development as well as partnerships with all actors to put transformation at the heart of DRR strategies. Transformation in this case meaning that DRR activities are an opportunity to build back better while also recognizing the need to move beyond resilience to embrace change in development and enable wellbeing.

The final suggestion is Coordination- Making science more readily available and accessible. More science is needed to continue deepen our understanding, forecasting and ability to respond to disaster needs but getting more knowledge out is not enough. Science needs to become more relevant to decision-making needs and decision-makers, equally communities needs to engage in the process of science generation. This is partly about connecting the dots and enhancing coordination, collaboration, and dialogue towards a shared goal of reducing disaster risks and building resilience of societies.

4-Mechanism

From our consultations, member states feel that improved international coordination and support for exchange of S&T would be useful in achieving DRR goals. Additionally in a recent survey by the UNISDR STAG, of DRR Networks and ISDR Thematic Platforms, greater than 90% also see a need for better coordination of the existing efforts and activities.

Governments and the science community believe it is necessary to consider a mechanism to deliver this coordination, as a way of strengthening DRR decision-makings taken at community, local, national and international level by providing a robust and accessible science and evidence-base as recognized in particular in section 18 d) of the pre-zero draft.

We intend to circulate a draft paper laying out the potential scope and functions of such a mechanism and hope to foster discussion with members states and major groups with a view to ensure that science can support, in the most effective ways, the implementation of the post-2015 framework for action on disaster risk reduction.

In conclusion, science is committed to act as a partner to Member States, alongside other stakeholders, addressing needs, developing (in consultation) the solutions, and supporting the actions for implementation which will lead to the success of HFA2.