

Joint UN Statement

Open-ended Informal Consultative Meeting

Section C: Guiding Principles

18 September, 2014

Excellencies, distinguished Member State representatives, colleagues

The UN System wishes to record its appreciation to the honourable Co-chairs, Bureau Members and to all Member States for the continued opportunity to participate in the Informal Consultations. The UN agencies and regional commissions serve Member States through technical assistance and cooperation aimed at reducing disaster risks and strengthening the resilience of communities and countries.

We believe the principles underpinning the successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA2) should contribute to delivering risk reduction as outlined in our joint UN statement to the 1st Preparatory Meeting:

‘Development cannot be sustained unless disaster risk reduction is fully integrated into risk-informed development planning and investments within and across sectors. A comprehensive approach to reducing the health, social, economic, and environmental impacts of disasters requires action to prevent and mitigate risks, combined with effective preparedness, response, recovery and reconstruction measures, thus contributing to the resilience of nations and communities.’

Given that, the UN offers the following observations on the section on ‘guiding principles’ within the pre-zero draft of the successor to the HFA. These reflect some of the areas that the UN system believes could be articulated more clearly and in places, more strongly.

A Focus on Inclusive and Comprehensive Risk Governance:

Central to member states delivering on risk reduction is their governance of risk. This should exist at all levels, and involve all institutions of government, from the national to the local, with special attention also paid in ensuring risk is governed regionally, between states. It also means delivering on the governance of disaster risk across every aspect of society and across all sectors, whether in urban or rural areas, whether in delivering in basic services or planning long-term development, and through both public and private investments. Aspects of this include:

- **Comprehensive risk management:** Efficient and effective disaster risk reduction (DRR) is based on managing risk rather than events. Risk assessments provide the foundation for planning and implementing prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery measures, helping to reduce the impact on health, social and economic development and the environment. In simple terms, risks can be reduced by reducing hazards, vulnerability and exposure, and strengthening capacities to manage.
- **An all-hazards approach:** Many actions to reduce risks are the same or similar for different types of hazards, risks and events. Efforts to reduce risk should, develop and strengthen and utilize elements, sectors and systems common to all types of hazards – natural, technological and societal.
- **Multisectoral integration:** Risk reduction relies on a whole of society approach under the leadership of government(s). It is responsible for maximizing the potential to reduce risk across society, whether in the public or private spheres, civil society or communities. In addition risk

reduction will only work where sectors collaborate effectively, integrating disciplines across shared concerns.

- **Evidence and Science:** Evidence should underpin DRR at every stage, and every decision made. This evidence should be continually improved through scientific advances, innovative solutions, and publicly accessible and easy-to-understand information. This information needs to include human development and vulnerability, specific aspects of resilience and disaster risk, such as hazards, exposure, urbanization, and data on economic losses and health and socio-economic impact. It should also include the experience gained through traditional and indigenous knowledge and practices.

A Focus on Vulnerability and Empowerment:

The world is becoming a riskier place, but at a different pace for different people. The most vulnerable should be the focus for risk reduction.

At the same time, the reduction of disaster risk is not for governments alone. All parts of society have a stake in ensuring that disaster risk is reduced and managed in the best way possible, and all have a role to play, and should be empowered to play that role. Leadership should be encouraged across society. Aspects of this include:

- **Transparency and Accountability:** This requires investment in clarity, especially at a country level, starting with the usage of basic terminology, through to descriptions of activities and programmes, and the tracking of financing across both public and private investments (especially when risk reduction is integrated in sectors and ministries). A strong national peer-review process is recommended in future reporting on progress, with a particular focus on local level accountability in high-risk areas.
- **Subsidiarity:** As much as possible risk should be managed by those who are best placed, especially at the local level. Local level risk reduction can ensure that risks are minimized, that incidents do not become emergencies and emergencies do not become disasters.
- **Cultural and Social Diversity:** The planning and implementation of DRR should be rooted in a deep understanding of the perceptions and attitudes of the concerned communities resulting from their culture, expressed through religious beliefs and historically-influenced behaviors. At the same time, the ability of culture to strengthen social cohesion and manage risks effectively should be recognized as a key component of the resilience of communities.
- **Women and DRR:** Gender equality and the empowerment of women should be a self-standing principle, one that also states that women's leadership and decision-making roles are paramount for building resilience. This would help ensure that commitments to gender equality are reflected explicitly in all policies and practices.

A Point on Standards:

The UN has been asked specifically by member-states to reflect on the importance of standards within the successor to the HFA2.

For the UN, standards are an essential component of governance. They enhance transparency and accountability in decision-making and are a crucial underpinning to an all-hazards approach. Three key points:

- Standards facilitate multi-sector integration by promoting the adoption of common risk management frameworks, a common terminology and methodology, bringing positive systemic effects and consistent approaches, across and within sectors.
- Standards can and are used in all aspects of DRR, whether in prevention, preparedness or

recovery. The use of standards increases the effectiveness and efficiency of all organisations including regulators, the private sector and civil society.

- Finally, the consistent use of standards' provides an opportunity to generate sound metrics and evidence, allowing for comparisons across sectors and geography, and for measuring progress towards agreed goals.

We therefore believe it is critical to include references inside HFA2 to freely available, publicly accessible, simple and easy-to-understand, standardized guidelines for the assessment and management of disaster risks.

Global, Regional and Local:

The UN system agrees that national-led risk reduction requires a meaningful global and regional and local partnership, underpinned by international cooperation. It also recognizes that core to this international cooperation is knowledge and technology transfer. The support should be sustained over time and targeted towards those countries that are most in need, with high-levels of risk, and lower levels of capacity.

Continued UN support for the Informal Consultative Meetings

As stated before the UN system stands ready to provide our technical assistance, including as appropriate, in suggesting specific language, to the Bureau and the Member States for the framing of the post-2015 framework throughout this process.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute these observations.