

Joint UN Statement

Open-ended Informal Consultative Meeting Structure

Section A: Preamble

Section B: Purpose, Scope, Outcome and Goals

5 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 opportunity to participate in the Informal Consultations as Observers and Resource Persons. 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. With that experience and the benefit of a UN system meeting with his Excellency the Ambassador of Thailand on Tuesday 2 September, we offer the following observations on the introductory sections of the pre-zero draft for consideration by Member States.

As UN entities dedicated to disaster risk reduction, we are familiar with the complexity of disaster risk reduction and therefore have some appreciation for the magnitude of the challenge associated with the development of the post-2015 framework.

Preamble – anchoring the human and institutional narrative

This complexity highlights the importance for the framework's structure of a clear narrative that links the various sections of the framework and speaks to all stakeholders who can change the way that disaster risks are managed. The framework's greater purpose could be seen as a "Call to Action".

The preamble plays an important role in anchoring the framework's overall narrative and the subsequent sections. It could set the scene by briefly outlining "how risks are created and exacerbated", "how risks and events affect people's health, well-being, livelihoods and economies, the environment and culture", "how these risks can be reduced", "by whom and with whom".

The narrative should be supported by evidence from progress reports, lessons identified, challenges, strengths and gaps in implementing disaster risk reduction.

Risks on a community and human scale

The narrative is a story of both humanity and institutions. While the preamble in the pre-zero draft has a strong emphasis on the institutional and economic perspective, we would propose to strengthen the narrative on people's experience of disaster risk, including human and social vulnerabilities, inequalities and resilience (with reference to socio-economic status, gender, disability, and age), and the health, social and economic consequences for people when events occur.

Risks are present on individual and community scales, where risk (rather than disasters) is a day-to-day phenomenon requiring actions by women and men and their communities to prevent, mitigate, prepare for, and respond to risks and events on a small-scale, as well as national and system-wide actions, supported by regional and global actions, required to manage risks on a larger scale.

There may be value to reflect early in the preamble the primary responsibility of each Member State to manage disaster risks.

The framework should integrate the sub-regional and regional dimensions which enable Member States to leverage regional solutions to address transboundary and increasingly shared risks.

Sectoral and intersectoral partnerships at all levels are paramount to facilitate and implement concerted action.

Inclusive language of the framework

The preamble may set the scene for using more inclusive language in the framework – for example, the term “disaster” is often associated with the narrow interpretation of infrequent large-scale events due to natural hazards. A focus on risks and inclusion of language related to extreme events, emergencies and disaster risk management may make the next framework more relevant to a wider range of actors in diverse countries, cultures and sectors.

Presenting the nature of risk

We propose the preamble introduces a brief reflection on the nature of risk around the relationship of hazards, exposure, vulnerabilities and the capacities of individuals, organizations and systems which help to build the resilience of communities, countries and regions. The understanding of these risks in a given context is the foundation for implementing disaster risk reduction measures.

Range of hazards made explicit

The preamble could be explicit about the range of hazards which the framework is designed to address. This includes natural hazards, such hydro-meteorological, geological and biological hazards which give rise to epidemics and pandemics, technological (including industrial) hazards, and to the risks from climate change. The link to societal hazards, such as conflict, social unrest and financial crises should also be considered as there are some commonalities in the approach to managing the respective risks.

Measures to manage risks, including prevention, preparedness, response and recovery

The preamble also provides the opportunity to convey that risks are managed through a combination of risk prevention, preparedness, response and recovery actions which directly reduce risks and contribute to health, social, economic and environmental outcomes. An emphasis on the multi-hazard or “all hazards” approaches would confer that many risk management actions, including preparedness and response, can be used to reduce risks and manage events irrespective of the cause.

Links to development and inclusive actions focused on the poor and most vulnerable

The preamble could describe how hazards affect countries in different ways, especially in the context of fragility and persistent food insecurity, in which disasters not only cause great suffering but also have significant impacts on development. Also, disasters continue to affect the poor and most vulnerable of communities disproportionately.

Attention to national development policies which focus on alleviating poverty and related determinants will contribute to reducing disaster risk and building the resilience of the poor and most vulnerable. This calls for inclusive policies and actions that protect and empower children, youth, women, elderly people, people with disabilities, migrants and displaced and refugee population, including measures to facilitate people's voluntary participation to improve community resilience.

Linking regional and global development and humanitarian policies to protect lives and livelihoods before, during and after disasters could also be mentioned within the preamble of the framework.

Strengthening weak and under-resourced sectors

In linking risks to action and sustainable development, the preamble could reflect that weak and under-resourced systems, in water resource management, transportation, health, education, agriculture and other sectors, compromise the capacity of communities and countries to manage risks of disasters and their impacts. The investment in the development of these sectors will not only strengthen their capacity to deliver services in normal times, but also build community resilience, reduce disasters risks, and enable communities and countries to cope with and recover from disasters.

In this respect, the preamble could also present a positive perspective about the protection of assets and the benefits of effective disaster risk management for sustainable development and the stability and security of nations.

A Call to Action - Focusing on action that reduces risk

In earlier reports on the progress of implementing disaster risk reduction, a common theme has been the limited action on underlying risk factors. The preamble could provide the inspiration for the post-2015 new framework as a "call to action", thus focusing the framework on action and scaling up implementation of disaster risk reduction, while showing how enabling factors (including risk governance, risk assessment, resource management, coordination mechanisms and operational partnerships) are critical to support action.

Critical role of sectors for implementing risk reduction

This focus on action provides an anchor for describing the critical role of sectors in implementing disaster risk reduction and directly contributing to outcomes – for example, in education, agriculture, food security, telecommunications, transport, environment and health, to name a few. It could refer to the continuing need for mainstreaming or integration of disaster risk reduction into these sectors and systems to increase the disaster resilience of their services and programmes. The intent is therefore to strengthen and adapt existing social, health, economic, environmental and other systems to manage risks more effectively and efficiently rather than to design parallel systems for

disaster risk reduction only. For example, it would be preferable for national statistics bodies to take an active role in collecting a range of disaster statistics, using international comparable formats on disaster risk, occurrence and impacts rather than create systems or agencies devoted to disaster data and information.

Strengthening outcomes – include health and wellbeing among outcomes

We propose that health and wellbeing is made an explicit outcome, alongside social, economic and environmental outcomes. The reduction in health consequences would thus infer deaths, injury, illness, disability, malnutrition and other chronic health conditions that affect school attendance, food and nutrition security, sustainable livelihoods and other social functioning.

Further unpacking of social and environmental outcomes is also suggested, including references to culture as an outcome of risk reduction, to measures to address the amplification of risks from ecosystem degradation, and to the role of all groups, including women and youth, as leaders and actors in disaster risk reduction.

References on the measurement of indicators, targets and outcomes should be accompanied by a call for disaggregated by sex, age and disability wherever possible.

Expressing outcomes of disaster risk reduction as a positive contribution

Consideration could also be given to an expression of the framework outcomes in terms of the positive contributions of disaster risk reduction and the benefits of well-managed risks for economic and social development; stability and security; for personal health and well-being; and for the natural and built environment, alongside the substantial reduction of losses and damage.

Elevation of resilience to an overarching goal

On the subject of resilience which is mentioned in the proposed third goal, the UN Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience has referred to disaster risk reduction as contributing to the overall resilience of communities and countries. Therefore, we would make the case for resilience to be elevated to the level of the overall outcome or vision for the framework, rather than being somewhat restricted to one goal. Furthermore, the other proposed goals of preventing new risks and reducing existing risks are considered important contributions to disaster resilience - an overarching, higher goal.

Linking the post-2015 framework to action on sustainable development and climate change

Finally, 2015 is the landmark year when three related global agreements on the Sustainable Development Goals, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction are due to be considered by Member States. Therefore, we propose that there are references in the preamble, explicit articulation in the goal statements, and through the narrative of the framework to the valuable contribution of disaster risk reduction to risk- assured sustainable development, and to climate change adaptation. In addition, we would propose that the framework should also identify other global agreed frameworks which relate to risk reduction, such as the International Health Regulations (2005) and the Social Protection Floor (2013), to ensure that the value-add of disaster risk reduction is

recognised and that the relevance of other frameworks are cross-referenced in the post-2015 framework on disaster risk reduction, as appropriate.

UN support for the Informal Consultative Meetings

The UN system stands ready to provide our technical assistance to the Bureau and the Member States for the framing of the post-2015 framework, and to the continuing implementation of the current HFA and the agreed 2015 framework in due course. The UN agencies will meet and consult with one another regularly, so that we will provide collective input on behalf of the UN system to the Informal Consultative Meetings. Representatives from UN agencies will also be available as resource persons in all of the informal consultative forums.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute these observations for your considerations. Should you require further details or suggested wording, UN agencies and our staff are at your disposal.

The Joint Statement by the UN System that was presented at the Open-ended Informal Consultative Meeting on 5 September was prepared under the aegis of the UN High Level Programmes Committee Senior Managers Group on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience (HLCP/SMG). The HLCP/SMG oversees the implementation of the *UN Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience*. Members are FAO, IAEA, IFAD, IFRC, ILO, IMO, IOM, ITU, UNAIDS, UNCCD, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHABITAT, UNHCHR, UNICEF, UNISDR, UNOCHA, UNOPS, UNOOSA, UNWOMEN, UNWTO, UPU, WFP, WHO, WMO and the World Bank.