

9 February 2011

Informal Thematic Debate on Disaster Risk Reduction

Background

Last year, a total of 950 disasters caused by natural hazards were recorded, 90 percent of which were weather-related events, such as storms and floods. This total makes 2010 the year with the second highest number of disasters since 1980. The overall losses amounted to around US\$130 billion, of which US\$ 37 billion was insured. These events claimed more than 296,000 lives and affected more than 208 million people. In addition to increased exposure of communities to extreme weather events and other natural hazards, the key drivers of disaster risk include poverty, rapid urbanization and the impact of climate change.

Recognizing the importance of reducing vulnerabilities and risks to hazards, especially in developing countries whose development gains can be wiped away with a single disaster, the United Nations General Assembly endorsed in 2005 the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters to promote systematic integration of disaster risk reduction efforts into policies, plans and programmes for sustainable development and poverty reduction. With the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) providing strategic guidance, national and local governments and other organizations at local, national, regional and international levels have taken measures to reduce underlying risk factors and strengthen disaster preparedness. It is often assumed that development efforts will also lead to the reduction of disaster risk or strengthened adaptation to climate change. Specific studies on disaster risk and the current trend in disaster impacts demonstrate that this may not always be the case. However, short-sighted and unsustainable development practices may contribute to increasing disaster risk. In addition, spending on measures to reduce risk, by national and local governments, remains insufficiently understood, both in scale and effectiveness.

As demonstrated by the 7.0 magnitude earthquake that hit Haiti in January 2010, wherein 222,570 people lost their lives (as opposed to Chile's 8.8 magnitude earthquake in February 2010, which caused 562 fatalities, and the 7.1 magnitude earthquake in New Zealand in September 2010, where there were no casualties), poor countries remain at a higher risk of disasters. Inadequate urban planning and infrastructure further undermine vulnerable livelihoods and threaten to reverse progress in meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Greater efforts and global partnerships are needed to safeguard the development investments made to reduce poverty and to strengthen countries capacity to cope with disaster impacts.

Objective and Expected Outcomes

The Informal Thematic Debate of the General Assembly on Disaster Risk Reduction aims to strengthen the understanding of how to reduce risk and exposure to disasters through effective investment policies and practices and sustainable urban management. Given the fact that the urban population in developing countries has risen by 77 percent to nearly 2.6 billion people in the last decade, special focus will be placed on rapidly expanding urban areas, where risk, population and economic assets are concentrated.

Building on the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the MDGs (September 2010, New York), which acknowledged that disaster risk reduction and increasing resilience to natural hazards can accelerate the achievement of the MDGs, the thematic debate will underscore the linkages between disaster risk reduction, poverty eradication and sustainable development. It is envisioned that these discussions and the President’s Summary of the thematic debate will help inform the third session of the biennial Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (Geneva, May 2011) and contribute to the substantive definition of priority actions and focus areas for the implementation of the HFA in its remaining four years.

Programme

Time	Programme (NLB Conference Room 3)
10 – 10:30 a.m.	<p>Opening Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss, President of the General Assembly • H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General
10:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.	<p><i>Interactive Panel Debate 1: Invest Today for a Safer Tomorrow</i></p> <p>Moderator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Zeinab Badawi, International broadcaster and journalist and presenter of BBC World News and BBC Hardtalk <p>Panelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amb. Toni Frisch, Chair of UNEP/OCHA Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies • Ms. Tioulong Saumura, Member of the Parliament of Cambodia and Vice-President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade • Dr. Abebe Haile-Gabriel, Director, Department of Rural Economy and

	<p>Agriculture, African Union Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Rubem Hofliger, General Director, Natural Disaster Fund (FONDEN), Mexico • Mr. Thomas Loster, Munich Re Foundation
1 – 2:30 p.m.	<p><i>High-level Luncheon</i> (hosted by the PGA, by invitation) <i>Brownbag Lunch Events</i> (see below)</p>
3 – 5:45 p.m.	<p><i>Interactive Panel Debate 2: Cities at Risk - Addressing the Challenges of Disaster Risk in Urban Settings</i></p> <p>Moderator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Zeinab Badawi <p>Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Joan Clos, Executive Director, UN-Habitat <p>Panel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Kadir Topbas, Mayor of Istanbul, Turkey • Mr. Oscar Ortiz, Mayor of Santa Tecla, El Salvador • Mr. Mawardy Nurdin, Mayor of Banda Aceh, Indonesia • Ms. Mary Jane Ortega, Secretary-General, CITYNET
5:45 – 6 p.m.	<p>Closing Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Margareta Wahlström, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction • H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss, President of the General Assembly

THEMATIC DEBATE OF THE 65TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

New York, 9 February 2011

President's Summary

The informal Thematic Debate on Disaster Risk Reduction was convened as a follow-up to the High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in September 2010, which acknowledged that disaster risk reduction and increasing resilience to all types of natural hazards can “have multiplier effects and accelerate achievement of the MDGs”. It aimed to strengthen the understanding on how effective investment policies and practices and sustainable urban management can reduce risk and exposure to disasters.

The panelists and participants discussed how to develop more strategic ways to reduce disaster risk and strengthen coping capabilities through investments. Noting that disasters, such as floods, droughts, earthquakes or climate change-driven weather anomalies, are becoming more frequent and intense, they focused on ways to preempt disasters – how to prepare and prevent and where to invest for disaster risk reduction.

Interactive Panel Debate 1: Invest Today for a Safer Tomorrow

Panelists and participants noted that once a disaster occurs, mounting an adequate response poses a serious challenge, especially for developing countries and the most vulnerable communities. Disasters can also wipe out important development gains and that is why investing in disaster risk reduction is so crucial.

They shared the view that disaster risk reduction is about ensuring that development investments are risk sensitive so that natural hazards do not turn into major disasters; any infrastructure development must account for risk reduction. Experiences have shown that one dollar invested in prevention can save several dollars in post-disaster rebuilding and reconstruction costs. While adequate financial resources are necessary, effective investment encompasses changing the reactive mindsets of governments and peoples to proactive actions. It also means mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into sustainable development policies, planning and programmes at local and national levels.

Panelists and participants reiterated their strong support for disaster risk reduction and its importance in protecting the gains made toward the MDGs and realizing sustainable development. Many countries shared their experiences on how investments towards the creation of more resilient communities are already paying off.

Many panelists agreed that without putting disaster risk reduction plans in place, it would be very difficult for poor countries to achieve the MDGs. Developing countries are generally less prepared for natural hazards than developed countries, as demonstrated in Haiti, where more than

222,000 people died as opposed to earthquakes of similar magnitude in more developed countries which killed far less people. In particular, attention was drawn to the fact that the least developed countries (LDCs) require technical and financial support to implement disaster risk reduction.

To address this gap in coping capabilities, participants from both developed and developing countries underscored the need for better coordination and more information-sharing among international agencies and disaster-prone countries. They also stressed the need to raise awareness about the vital necessity of risk preparedness. Since even the slightest delay in post-disaster response can turn a relatively small crisis into a complex emergency, a country needs to be well prepared and ready to respond in order to avert unnecessary loss of lives and livelihoods.

Several Member States stressed the need for the international community to focus beyond emergency relief and concentrate on implementing long-term programmes related to poverty eradication, sustainable development and disaster risk reduction. Strengthening disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation was also stressed as essential as well as the need to improve risk assessments and to make better use of risk management expertise held by the insurance and re-insurance sectors.

Interactive Panel Debate 2: Cities at Risk – Addressing the Challenges of Disaster Risk in Urban Settings

Poorly planned urban environments, weak urban governance, lack of infrastructure and basic services and rapid population growth have increased disaster risk in urban areas. With more than 50 per cent of the world's population now living in urban areas and with urban disaster victims now outnumbering their rural counterparts, panelists and participants stressed that concrete measures must be taken to boost the resilience of cities.

How to rehabilitate existing settlement areas and how to plan new settlements are the two questions that must be considered in light of urban risk. Participants highlighted that cities need to share their disaster risk reduction experiences and best practices and that local level participation is crucial for successful disaster risk reduction. They also underscored the importance of cooperation among local and national governments as well as the private sector, civil society and other key stakeholders.

UN-Habitat outlined five urban “commandments” necessary for a resilient city, namely: never build on a slope with a gradient over 10 per cent; never build in river basins, even if they have been dry for decades; never build in low lands without proper drainage; never build an urban space without allocating at least 30 per cent of the land for streets; and never build streets less than 25 metres wide.

Panelists stressed that local authorities should act as a counterweight to national authorities by having their own capacity on the ground, including instruments allowing not only response but also risk mitigation, developed through lessons learned from actual disasters.

Several participants also drew attention to the *Making Cities Resilient – My City is Getting Ready* campaign, which encourages local government leaders worldwide to invest more in disaster risk reduction activities such as: improving urban planning, infrastructure and building safety; reinforcing drainage systems to reduce flood, storm and health threats; installing early warning systems; conducting public preparedness drills; and taking measures to adapt to the increasing impacts of climate change. As of February 2011, close to 600 cities have signed on to the campaign.

Conclusion

The informal Thematic Debate emphasized that the effective strengthening of communities' resilience requires new and innovative forms of public-private partnerships in the political, economic, financial, and research fields. Several calls were heard during the event, including the need to elaborate principles for monitoring achievements in disaster risk reduction, the need for internationally accepted standards for disaster risk reduction initiatives to ensure transparency and accountability as well as the need for enhanced data collection.

In addition, participants called for the scaling-up of investments in disaster risk reduction activities, including for education and safer schools, better urban planning, sharing of information and technology, and raising of awareness, especially to ensure that specific disasters and needs of the victims remained high on the international agenda long after they had dropped from the news headlines.

In sum, panelists and participants repeated the three core notions:

The first is *awareness*- awareness from experience and the lessons learned from the past.
The second is to *prioritize*- to respect the five commandments and not blaming the nature.
The third is *prevention*- although prevention through investment is mostly not spectacular because when it is effective, nobody can see it and nothing happens. But at the end of the day, “nothing happens” is everyone's shared objective.

The discussions of the Thematic Debate will contribute to the upcoming Third Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, which will convene from 8-13 May 2011 in Geneva as well as the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in 2012 in Rio de Janeiro.



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA
BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JORGE ARGÜELLO, PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF ARGENTINA TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND
CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP OF 77, AT THE INFORMAL THEMATIC DEBATE
OF THE 65TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION
New York, 9 February 2011**

Mr. President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates:

I have the honor of addressing this thematic debate on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. At the outset, allow me to congratulate you on taking the initiative of convening this Thematic Debate on Disaster Risk Reduction, topic of crucial importance for sustainable development and for our Group.

Mr. President,

Over the years the humanitarian challenges resulting from complex emergencies and natural disasters continue to increase especially in developing countries. The last year has been unprecedented in this regard. As a result, millions of people were killed and millions are displaced. Thousands of houses and farmlands were destroyed. A large number of people are suffering from diseases and living with unmet health needs. Moreover, these challenges have been compounded by the impact of the global economic and financial crisis, world food crisis and continuing food insecurity, energy crisis and the challenges posed by climate change.

One single event occurring in developing countries can sweep away all efforts in infrastructure and urban planning undertaken for developing countries to eradicate poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals

Preexisting economic, social and environmental vulnerabilities can affect the ability of developing countries to cope with the adverse impacts of disasters.

These facts are widely recognized in the Report of the Secretary-General (A/65/388) on the Implementation of the Disaster Risk Reduction: "Developing countries are less resilient to large or recurring shocks. Natural hazards kill more people in developing than in developed countries, and disaster related economic losses, measured against a country's wealth, are relatively much larger in poor countries. Disaster impacts undermine vulnerable livelihoods, countries' economic growth and progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals."

The Group of 77 and China fully supports the *International Strategy for Disaster Reduction*, the *Hyogo Declaration* and the *Hyogo Framework for action*, and is committed to further promoting their principles and objectives. In this regard, last year the Group presented a draft resolution on agenda item 20 c) Sustainable Development, entitled:

“International Strategy for Disaster Reduction”, that was adopted by consensus by the General Assembly.

The Group of 77 and China would like this General Assembly to convey a message of strong support and urgency to the member States meeting at the third session of the Biennial Global Platform for disaster risk reduction, which will convene in Geneva in May, 2011.

There is no doubt that the following measures to address disaster risk reduction must be further pursued:

1. Strengthening coordination among UN agencies and governments to achieve a more efficient response, care and coverage.
2. The promotion of public awareness and commitment, the expansion of networks and partnerships, the improvement of knowledge about causes of disasters through risk assessments and options for risk reduction, as well as building resilience and strengthening coping capacities;
3. Encouraging the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, to continue to support the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

Additionally, and regarding the indispensable international cooperation and investment that Governments need to urgently make at all levels so that humanity can have a safe future tomorrow, further efforts are needed, including:

1. The provision of new and additional financial resources and transfer of technology, from developed countries to developing countries, to promote the implementation of programs aimed at disaster risk reduction; and the enhancement of their national and regional capacities for the implementation of plans and strategies for prevention, including early warning systems, preparedness, rapid response, recovery and development in relation to natural disasters;
2. Scaling up the availability of timely, stable and predictable resources for the implementation of the Strategy and the operation of the Secretariat of the Strategy.

Finally, Mr. President,

We highlight the need for the international community to maintain its focus beyond emergency relief and to support medium- and long-term rehabilitation, reconstruction and risk reduction, and stress the importance of implementing and adapting long-term programmes related to the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and disaster risk reduction management in developing countries.

I thank you.



ARMENIA

February 9, 2011

REMARKS BY
GAREN NAZARIAN, AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
AT THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY THEMATIC DEBATE
ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Mr. President,

Armenia welcomes your initiative of holding this thematic debate and the acknowledgement of the fact that global efforts and partnership are required to safeguard the development and accelerate achievements of the MDGs and strengthen the capacity of the countries to cope with disaster impacts.

I thank the distinguished panellists for their thoughtful presentations and wish to further elaborate on the issue of the need for development investments in the field of disaster reduction.

We believe it is timely to talk about the reorientation of priorities within national governments from disaster response-centred approaches to preventive strategies to manage natural disasters and provide the countries with practical guidance, tools and knowledge necessary to build a safer tomorrow.

The Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters) serves an important guidance for disaster reduction at all levels and defines strategies and policy, providing integrated mechanisms for addressing such a complex and cross-cutting issue as disaster reduction.

As Armenia's National progress report on the implementation of this Framework for Action for the period 2009-2011 notes, we were able to incorporate disaster risk management outlines into development plans and programs of the Government.

In particular, Emergency response commission was established during last year. Works on the establishment of Disaster Risk Reduction Fund are

carried out and thanks to support of UNDP, creation of National Disaster Observatory and Disaster Risk Reduction National Platform is in development phase.

In order to develop and strengthen the institutions, mechanisms and capacities at all levels, in particular at the community level, we have developed Zoning schemes of communities and worked out 3-year development plans for rural regions.

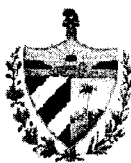
In all other Strategic areas we were able to move forward as well. By the decision of the Government of Armenia “Program of sustainable development” was adopted that includes tasks of reduction of main factors of risk including tasks of reduction of seismic risk and management of landslide disasters and stability of buildings and constructions.

Mr. President,

For the momentum, the achievements and the expertise built up during the MDG implementation period to remain constant, we must, with the support of concerted actors within and outside the UN system, provide high visibility and credibility for coordinating mechanisms in such fields as increased preparedness of emergency response, planning and implementation of DRR activities, improving the monitoring system in the countries in case of emergencies.

I conclude by welcoming the upcoming 3rd session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction to be held this May in Geneva and believe it will offer an important forum to elaborate on further strategies for a safer world in the 21st Century.

Thank you.



MISIÓN PERMANENTE DE CUBA ANTE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS
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INTERVENCIÓN DE LA DELEGACIÓN CUBANA EN EL DEBATE SOBRE REDUCCIÓN DE RIESGOS DE DESASTRE. Nueva York, 9 de febrero de 2011.

Señor Presidente,

Los desastres se incrementan a nivel mundial. La preocupación de la comunidad internacional ante esta realidad motivó que la década del 90 se declarara como Decenio Internacional para la Reducción de los Desastres Naturales. No tenemos otra alternativa que pasar de la simple respuesta ante los desastres a la reducción de éstos.

Ante la tendencia al aumento de los desastres, es imprescindible cumplir las acciones establecidas en el Marco de Acción de Hyogo y lograr que la reducción de los riesgos de desastre sea una prioridad.

Los desastres no se producen sólo como consecuencia del impacto de eventos cada vez más recurrentes y severos, sino que están relacionados fundamentalmente con las vulnerabilidades que se crean y acumulan; y con las insuficiencias para garantizar una respuesta y recuperación eficaces y eficientes.

El mayor riesgo en materia de desastres en la actualidad lo constituye la acción irresponsable del propio hombre, contra sus semejantes y contra la naturaleza. Fenómenos de consecuencias catastróficas para la humanidad, como el cambio climático y los conflictos armados, en especial la posibilidad de una guerra nuclear, son el resultado directo de esta acción irresponsable de los hombres.

Los desastres son una enorme amenaza al desarrollo y nos afectan a todos, pero los más pobres y marginados del planeta, siguen siendo las principales víctimas.

La reducción del índice de vulnerabilidad está estrechamente relacionada con el desarrollo de los pueblos, por lo que garantizar una eficaz ayuda al desarrollo es la vía más directa para reducir el impacto de los crecientes desastres.

Señor presidente,

Cuba, un país pequeño, con limitada posibilidad económica y sometida a un bloqueo criminal e ilegal por más de 50 años, ha logrado avances sustantivos en las metas del Plan de Acción de Hyogo.

Las lecciones aprendidas, nos han permitido reforzar los marcos normativos, legislativos e institucionales para la reducción de los riesgos de desastre, y fortalecer el trabajo del Sistema de la Defensa Civil.

En Cuba, desde el año 1997, se incluyó en la legislación vigente el concepto de reducción de desastres.

Las medidas de reducción del riesgo de desastres son organizadas e implementadas en Cuba a través del Sistema de Defensa Civil, que está integrado por todas las fuerzas y recursos de la sociedad y del Estado, con la función de proteger a las personas y sus bienes, la infraestructura social, la economía y los recursos naturales.

Es la prevención la parte fundamental del Sistema de Defensa Civil en Cuba, y entre las principales acciones llevadas a cabo en nuestro país en materia de reducción de desastres se encuentran: la realización de estudios de riesgos de desastres; la vigilancia y monitoreo de peligros de desastres; la creación de Centros de Gestión de Reducción de Riesgos; el control de la reducción de vulnerabilidades mediante el proceso de compatibilización e impedimento de creación de estas; la creación y fortalecimiento de sectores, instituciones, mecanismos y capacidades a todo nivel, en particular en el ámbito comunitario; el desarrollo de programas de divulgación y educación comunitaria en interés de la reducción del riesgo, la cooperación con organismos y órganos del Sistema de Naciones Unidas y el cumplimiento del Marco de Acción de Hyogo.

Señor Presidente,

En material de Gestión de Reducción de Riesgo, nuestro país tiene Acuerdos de Cooperación con varios países y trabaja en proyectos conjuntos con países hermanos de América Latina y el Caribe.

Como parte de la cooperación Sur-Sur, durante el 2010 Cuba brindó asistencia técnica a Haití en dos ocasiones y una en Chile, y se efectuaron en nuestro país dos talleres regionales sobre la reducción de riesgo a nivel local, así como el VIII Congreso Internacional sobre Desastres, entre otros eventos.

Cuba reitera su disposición a compartir sus modestas experiencias, con la esperanza de que resulten útiles a otros países; convencidos, además, de que juntos podremos trabajar por mitigar nuestras vulnerabilidades y disminuir los riesgos de desastres.

Muchas gracias.

1 Madame la Présidente

Maroc

Je voudrais, tout d'abord, saluer vivement l'initiative de Monsieur le Président de l'Assemblée Générale de convoquer cette réunion cruciale, qui intervient à un moment où la Communauté internationale, ne pourrait demeurer indifférente face à la multiplication croissante des catastrophes et désastres naturels.

En prenant l'initiative d'organiser cette Réunion de Haut Niveau, le Président de l'Assemblée Générale nous rappelle que la solidarité humanitaire ne pourrait se soustraire au caractère collectif et universel de la Coopération Internationale.

Notre Réunion, aujourd'hui, est un signal politique fort, adressé à toutes les composantes de la Communauté internationale: Gouvernements, Organisations Internationales, Institutions financières internationales, Organisations Non Gouvernementales, Société civile et autres, pour réfléchir ensemble, sur les remèdes les plus appropriés, susceptibles de prévenir et réduire le fléau des catastrophes naturelles.

Les impacts dramatiques du tremblement de terre d'Haïti et du Chili, les inondations tragiques du Pakistan, attestent aujourd'hui de la vulnérabilité extrême des pays en développement face aux effets destructeurs des désastres naturels.

Les effets destructeurs des catastrophes naturelles nous interpellent tous et nous espérons que la rencontre d'aujourd'hui accroîtra efficacement la mobilisation et l'engagement de la Communauté internationale, pour parvenir, à relever le défi des désastres naturels.

~~Madame la Présidente~~
Monsieur le Président,

Je ne pourrais parcourir cette intervention, sans partager avec vous et avec la Communauté Internationale, l'expérience du Maroc, en matière de lutte contre les risques naturels.

Conscient de l'impact des catastrophes naturelles et technologiques sur le plan économique et social, le Royaume du Maroc a renforcé, au cours de la dernière décennie, sa politique nationale en matière de réduction des risques de catastrophes naturelles et technologiques. Cette politique, qui repose sur le concept du développement durable entend intégrer la nécessité de surmonter le

facteur risque, dans le cadre du processus de développement économique et social du pays.

En effet, les efforts d'intégration de la notion de la gestion des risques dans la politique publique marocaine se sont fortement multipliés, au cours de cette dernière décennie, notamment, suite au séisme ayant frappé la ville marocaine d'Al Hoceima. Le Rapport National, préparé à l'occasion du Sommet de Kobe (Japon), relate les mutations administratives de notre pays pour donner davantage de visibilité institutionnelle à ce secteur.

Soucieux de prévenir les conséquences dramatiques, provenant des catastrophes naturelles, le Royaume du Maroc a élaboré de nombreuses actions de prévention et de gestion des risques dont le Plan d'Action National pour la Protection de l'Environnement, le Plan Directeur National de Protection contre les inondations, le Plan National de Lutte contre l'Invasion Acridienne, le Plan Directeur pour la Protection et la Lutte contre les Incendies de Forêts ainsi que la Stratégie Nationale, relative à la réduction des Risques Naturels engendrés par les phénomènes météorologiques dangereux. Dans la même perspective, le Royaume du Maroc a également mis en place plusieurs réseaux de mesures de surveillance et d'alerte précoce tels que les réseaux sismologiques et météorologiques. Des mesures d'accompagnement pour la réussite de ces mesures sont actuellement menées dans les domaines de l'information, la communication, l'éducation et la recherche scientifique pour une meilleure prévention et gestion des risques.

La proposition de la stratégie marocaine pour la réduction des risques de catastrophes naturelles intègre à la fois le contexte national et respecte l'esprit de la Déclaration de Hyogo. Cette stratégie marocaine a pour objectif ultime, la réduction notoire aussi bien du nombre de victimes que l'ampleur des dégâts matériels engendrés par les catastrophes naturelles. Elle est structurée conformément aux priorités retenues par la déclaration de Hyogo, issue des travaux de la Conférence Mondiale sur la Prévention des catastrophes. Elle conçoit la prévention des Risques comme une responsabilité partagée entre l'Etat et les citoyens.

L'adoption de la stratégie marocaine de réduction des risques et des catastrophes naturels (2007-2015) définissant des programmes aux échelles nationale, régionale et locale devrait permettre l'intégration de la prévention des catastrophes dans le développement national et régional. La promotion de la

sensibilisation, l'éducation, la formation et la communication passe par l'exploitation des ressources nationales et internationales.

Nadame la Présidente
~~Monsieur le Président,~~

L'avenir demeure entre nos mains, à nous d'en faire l'héritage d'une génération, qui a su réagir à temps, face à une menace, sans précédant dans l'histoire de l'humanité.

Je suis persuadé que les travaux de cette Réunion déboucheront sur des résultats concrets, susceptibles de concourir à la concrétisation de notre objectif commun, celui d'épargner notre planète, des effets dangereux des désastres naturels.

Le Maroc demeure déterminé à participer activement à ce processus en contribuant à l'identification des alternatives appropriées, susceptibles d'améliorer le bien être de notre Communauté Internationale et partant, prévenir l'avenir écologique des générations futures.

Je vous remercie

Je voudrais, tout d'abord, saluer vivement l'initiative de Monsieur le Président de l'Assemblée Générale de convoquer cette réunion cruciale, qui intervient à un moment où la Communauté internationale, ne pourrait demeurer indifférente face à la multiplication croissante des catastrophes et désastres naturels.

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Conscient de l'impact des catastrophes naturelles et technologiques sur le plan économique et social, le Royaume du Maroc a renforcé, au cours de la dernière décennie, sa politique nationale en matière de réduction des risques de catastrophes naturelles et technologiques. Cette politique, qui repose sur le concept du développement durable entend intégrer la nécessité de surmonter le

facteur risque, dans le cadre du processus de développement économique et social du pays.

En effet, les efforts d'intégration de la notion de la gestion des risques dans la politique publique marocaine se sont fortement multipliés, au cours de cette dernière décennie, notamment, suite au séisme ayant frappé la ville marocaine d'Al Hoceima. Le Rapport National, préparé à l'occasion du Sommet de Kobe (Japon), relate les mutations administratives de notre pays pour donner davantage de visibilité institutionnelle à ce secteur.

Soucieux de prévenir les conséquences dramatiques, provenant des catastrophes naturelles, le Royaume du Maroc a élaboré de nombreuses actions de prévention et de gestion des risques dont le Plan d'Action National pour la Protection de l'Environnement, le Plan Directeur National de Protection contre les inondations, le Plan National de Lutte contre l'Invasion Acridienne, le Plan Directeur pour la Protection et la Lutte contre les Incendies de Forêts ainsi que la Stratégie Nationale, relative à la réduction des Risques Naturels engendrés par les phénomènes météorologiques dangereux. Dans la même perspective, le Royaume du Maroc a également mis en place plusieurs réseaux de mesures de surveillance et d'alerte précoce tels que les réseaux sismologiques et météorologiques. Des mesures d'accompagnement pour la réussite de ces mesures sont actuellement menées dans les domaines de l'information, la communication, l'éducation et la recherche scientifique pour une meilleure prévention et gestion des risques.

La proposition de la stratégie marocaine pour la réduction des risques de catastrophes naturelles intègre à la fois le contexte national et respecte l'esprit de la Déclaration de Hyogo. Cette stratégie marocaine a pour objectif ultime, la réduction notoire aussi bien du nombre de victimes que l'ampleur des dégâts matériels engendrés par les catastrophes naturelles. Elle est structurée conformément aux priorités retenues par la déclaration de Hyogo, issue des travaux de la Conférence Mondiale sur la Prévention des catastrophes. Elle conçoit la prévention des Risques comme une responsabilité partagée entre l'Etat et les citoyens.

L'adoption de la stratégie marocaine de réduction des risques et des catastrophes naturels (2007-2015) définissant des programmes aux échelles nationale, régionale et locale devrait permettre l'intégration de la prévention des catastrophes dans le développement national et régional. La promotion de la

sensibilisation, l'éducation, la formation et la communication passe par l'exploitation des ressources nationales et internationales.

Nadame la Présidente
~~Monsieur le Président,~~

L'avenir demeure entre nos mains, à nous d'en faire l'héritage d'une génération, qui a su réagir à temps, face à une menace, sans précédent dans l'histoire de l'humanité.

Je suis persuadé que les travaux de cette Réunion déboucheront sur des résultats concrets, susceptibles de concourir à la concrétisation de notre objectif commun, celui d'épargner notre planète, des effets dangereux des désastres naturels.

Le Maroc demeure déterminé à participer activement à ce processus en contribuant à l'identification des alternatives appropriées, susceptibles d'améliorer le bien être de notre Communauté Internationale et partant, prévenir l'avenir écologique des générations futures.

Je vous remercie

New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations



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GENERAL ASSEMBLY

INFORMAL THEMATIC DEBATE ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

STATEMENT

by

H.E. JIM MCLAY
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

Wednesday 9 February 2011

Check against delivery

For New Zealand, disaster risk reduction is no academic issue. Our country and region are prone to natural disasters, including floods, cyclones and earthquakes. Our Pacific Island neighbours are particularly vulnerable – and, while, on a world scale, theirs' can sometimes be small disasters, for small countries, the impact can be huge. Development gains can be wiped away by a single event.

Recently, New Zealand's own disaster preparedness was put to the test. In September 2010 an earthquake of 7.1 magnitude struck, its epicentre not far from our second largest city, Christchurch. At only 5 km deep this was a major earthquake, the same magnitude as in Haiti. Despite \$5 billion dollars of property damage, no one died.

Nearly six months later, aftershocks still continue, but recovery is well underway -a huge task that will take some years. There's already been initial reflection on the response – an independent review is under way, and we may be able to share its findings in May's session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Several factors contributed to the relatively limited consequences. First, we were lucky; it struck at 4.30 on a Saturday morning. Commercial areas were closed and most people were at home. At another time of day the story could have been different. Although close to Christchurch, the epicentre was in a mainly rural area.

Second, building codes generally worked. These must take account of an area's "hazard-scape", and must be enforced by local authorities. Much of the damage was to older brick or stone buildings, many in the central part of Christchurch. In the suburbs, many houses were similarly damaged - more than 15,000 brick chimneys collapsed. There was also damage to infrastructure, including roads and older water and sewer pipes. In some areas there was liquefaction, resulting in shifting, sliding and sinking of land, including in some newer residential developments. Although most of this land can be "remediated", and the houses rebuilt, tighter conditions may be imposed on such developments in the future.

The earthquake was also a test for New Zealand's 2002 Civil Defence and Emergency Management Act, which adopted a new approach broadly consistent with the 2005 Hyogo Framework for Action. This involves a national strategy using the '4 Rs': Reduction, Readiness, Response and Recovery. Local civil defence and emergency management groups have a coordination role before, during and after natural disasters, including dealing with "lifeline" utilities such as power, water and telecommunications. This contributed positively to the Christchurch response.

Central government also reacted quickly, appointing a Minister with oversight responsibilities and establishing a Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Commission.

The Earthquake Commission - set up 60 years ago to provide earthquake cover for residential properties, plays a key role, including administering a Natural Disaster Fund which will meet much of the cost of damage to Christchurch homes.

Effective emergency management must be multi-dimensional - the 4 'Rs' must interact and complement one another. Decisions made now on the way buildings are rebuilt or repaired will directly impact on future preparedness.

What else did we see?

"Being ready" counts at every level - household, business, city, region and national.

To be ready, we must understand and manage the risk - this requires a solid foundation of science and research which informs policies and practices, including land use planning. This earthquake occurred on a previously unknown fault-line, a surprise to planners.

"Being ready" also requires public education, but involves more than just disseminating information: engagement is required. School programmes play an important role and can help improve preparedness levels in the broader community.

New Zealand is relatively well prepared, but can still do things better. The 2010 earthquake should be a wake-up call but a challenge now is to guard against complacency. The impression that things went well can seriously impact on-going resilience efforts.

We are also working on further integrating disaster risk reduction into our development programmes and recently announced a new, three-year commitment to broad-based disaster preparedness in the Pacific, particularly enhanced tsunami readiness in the South West Pacific. New Zealand also supports a new hazard mapping exercise in Samoa, including developing evacuation routes for coastal communities.

Disasters happen; we can't prevent them, but New Zealand's recent experience shows that we can take steps to reduce the impact and ensure those affected are prepared for quick recovery. That must be our objective.

**Informal Thematic Debate of the 65th Session of the United Nations
General Assembly on Disaster Risk Reduction**

Wednesday 9 February 2011

Remarks by Pakistan on Disaster Management – Lessons Learnt

I thank you for this debate. Let me also thank the panelists for their valuable insight.

Pakistan has learnt valuable lessons in disaster risk management, which we believe must form part of any future risk mitigation strategies.

Before I move to lessons learnt, I would like to briefly outline before you Pakistan's disaster risk management structure and framework under which we operate.

Pakistan's vulnerabilities to disaster risk are many. Our national strategy identifies a range of hazards notably:

- i. Avalanches, glacial lake outbursts and landslides;
- ii. Cyclones/storms;
- iii. Droughts;
- iv. Earthquakes, and
- v. Floods.

We are also cognizant of human induced hazards including transport, industrial, oil spills, urban and forest fires, civil conflicts and internal displacements of communities due to multiple factors as well as climate change;

Our strategy accords high priority to earthquakes, droughts, flooding, Wind Storms and Landslides. In recent past events in this category have inflicted serious damage to Pakistan's economic infrastructure.

The loss of life and property and the challenges that were faced in the aftermath of October 2005 earthquake affecting Azad Jammu and Kashmir and the NWFP province exhibited the need for establishing appropriate policy and institutional arrangements to reduce losses from disasters in future.

Consequently, we established the NDMC, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to coordinate and monitor implementation of National Policies and Strategies on disaster management.

One of the major lessons we have drawn from our experience is the need to devolve and de-centralize institutional arrangements for disaster management. Accordingly, Provincial Disaster Management Commissions (PDMCs) and Authorities (PDMAs) have been established while similar arrangements have been made in AJ&K and Northern Areas.

The National Disaster risk Management Framework, developed through wide consultation with stakeholders from local, provincial and national levels, identifies National Strategies and Policies for disaster management. Nine priority areas have been identified within this framework to establish and strengthen policies, institutions and capacities over the next five years: These include:-

1. Institutional and legal arrangements for DRM
2. Hazard and vulnerability assessment.
3. Training, education and awareness.
4. Disaster risk management planning.
5. Community and local level programming.
6. Multi-hazard early warning system.
7. Mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development.
8. Emergency response system, and
9. Capacity development for post disaster recovery.

Floods and Pakistan

Last year Pakistan faced the biggest disaster in its history. The torrential rains and consequent floods led to dislocation and loss of life and infrastructure.

The impact of these floods cannot simply be ascertained from the extent of the floodwater that may have stranded millions of people alone but rather its long term impact i.e. how to rehabilitate and target such efforts towards those most in need; the poor and marginalized. In our view, some of the important lessons on which we need to invest today include:

Identifying and getting to the most in need: In a flood that had covered an area equal to the United Kingdom, the provision of immediate relief to all requires training of volunteers and search and rescue capacities in farthest rural areas.

Role of Community: We have benefitted from the role played by “host communities” during the dislocation of 2009, in the wake of floods extended

families in other parts of the country played the role of host communities. It is important to integrate responses to such disaster in over all community development policies.

*Needs Assessment:*All aid must help people most in need, and it must be the right kind, based on accurate information received from the disaster area. On ground condition must determine the priorities as opposed to donor priorities. Assistance should be provided in close consultation with local authorities and the community.

Rehabilitation efforts must go beyond provision of basic needs: Needs assessments and relief programmes should go beyond current needs, and assess structural causes of vulnerability. While in the first instance relief is about saving lives, aid should be delivered and designed to contribute to a long-term improvement of people's lives, and the prevention of future catastrophes.

Flood Risk Management and Reduction: there is a need to develop market based tools for flood risk management, reduction and mitigation such as flood insurance schemes for farmers. Our approach towards such disasters must go beyond "technical fixes" and include socio-economic considerations.

Early warning: There is no substitute for an early warning system and one in which people can trust and have knowledge off and understand. A large number of people despite having received some level of warning once the floods moved Southwards in Pakistan could not grasp the extent of disaster. So the right message and correct communication that is well received by the audience at the right time remains important in reducing risks.

I thank you.



PERU

**Intervención
Del Ministro Roberto Rodríguez
Representante Permanente Alterno del Perú
ante las Naciones Unidas
en el debate temático informal
organizado por la Presidencia de la Asamblea General
sobre Reducción de Desastres**

Nueva York, 9 de febrero de 2011

Muchas gracias señor Presidente.

Deseo, en primer lugar, expresar mi felicitación a la Presidencia de la Asamblea General por la organización de este importante evento cuya temática guarda íntima relación con la agenda actual de todos los países del mundo y, en particular, con la de los países en vías de desarrollo, que ven comprometidas sus aspiraciones de lograr un crecimiento sostenible e inclusivo por la amenaza y recurrencia de desastres, los cuales sumados a factores condicionantes como la agudización del cambio climático, vienen mermando la capacidad de respuesta y adaptación de nuestros países frente a estos hechos.

Al mismo tiempo, deseo dejar constancia de nuestra coincidencia con lo expresado anteriormente por el Embajador de la República Argentina en nombre del Grupo de los 77 y China en torno a este importante tema.

Señor Presidente

Quisiera utilizar brevemente este espacio para comentar, a manera de contribución para el diálogo interactivo que estoy seguro se iniciará en unos momentos más, parte de lo que ha sido la experiencia peruana en la incorporación de medidas para lograr la reducción de los riesgos que representan los desastres dentro del diseño de políticas públicas, en este caso desde la esfera presupuestal del Estado.

Para ello me parece importante, en primer lugar, describir el "perfil de riesgo" de nuestro país. De acuerdo a un estudio elaborado por la Comisión Multisectorial de Estrategia Nacional de Reducción de Riesgos para el Desarrollo, formada en el Perú en el año 2004; el Perú ha sido clasificado como un país con zonas de múltiples peligros. En particular, y en relación con los eventos de origen natural, la presencia de eventos meteorológicos y telúricos son los que en su mayoría abundan en el país. Dicha Comisión señaló, asimismo, que 89 provincias del Perú (de un total de 195) estaban calificadas como de muy alto peligro y alto peligro, respectivamente. Estas 89 provincias de mayor peligro involucran al 65% de la población peruana.

Tomando en cuenta dicho diagnóstico y consciente de la necesidad de reducir el impacto negativo de las emergencias en el bienestar de la población, el gobierno peruano inició el desarrollo de una propuesta de **Programa Presupuestal Estratégico de la Reducción de la Vulnerabilidad y Atención de Emergencias por Desastres** en el Marco del Presupuesto por Resultados, que permita una asignación suficiente de recursos económicos para contribuir a resolver esta problemática.

Este programa se encuentra incorporado en el Presupuesto General de la República y está orientado a conseguir resultados vinculados a la reducción de la vulnerabilidad de la población y sus medios de vida ante la ocurrencia de amenazas naturales tales como: El Fenómeno de "El Niño", lluvias intensas, heladas y sismos. Comprende, asimismo, un conjunto de intervenciones articuladas entre el Ministerio de Agricultura, Ministerio de Vivienda, Construcción y Saneamiento, Ministerio de Transporte, Ministerio de Salud, Ministerio de Educación, Instituto Nacional de Defensa Civil, los Gobiernos Regionales y los Gobiernos Locales.

La utilidad práctica de esta herramienta nos está permitiendo no solo programar de una mejor manera la asignación de recursos para el manejo de desastres y la mitigación de

sus daños sino también neutralizar el impacto negativo de amenazas y desastres de gran magnitud pero que no tienen una alta frecuencia, como el Fenómeno de “El Niño” y el terremoto que afectó la Región peruana de Ica en el 2007; cuyos impactos fueron de gran proporción. En ese sentido, es importante la existencia de un Programa Estratégico que contribuya a disminuir el riesgo de desastres, haciendo a la población menos vulnerable a dichas amenazas.

Junto a este programa, se ha incorporado, asimismo, el análisis del riesgo en el Sistema Nacional de Inversión Pública, que ha sido considerado como un avance en la implementación del Marco de Acción de Hyogo^[1], en lo que se refiere a la *“Introducción de planes y políticas en el sector económico y de la producción para reducir la vulnerabilidad de las actividades económicas”*.

Dentro de este contexto, señor Presidente, podemos decir que el Marco de Acción de Hyogo se ha convertido en un lineamiento internacional que enmarca el trabajo de la gestión del riesgo en el Perú.

Señor Presidente:

A nivel multilateral, el Perú apoya el trabajo que se viene llevando a cabo en la implementación de la Estrategia Internacional para la Reducción de Desastres, en consonancia con las Resoluciones adoptadas por la Asamblea General, en la última de las cuales (65/157) el Perú tuvo una directa participación en su elaboración y negociación. Creemos, en esa línea, que las capacidades de la Secretaría deben ser fortalecidas en todos los aspectos, incluyendo el de sus recursos, para que pueda continuar catalizando las iniciativas y programas que permitan la completa implementación de los objetivos y marcos referenciales ya acordados en Hyogo por la inmensa mayoría de la comunidad internacional.

Muchas gracias.

^[1] En el marco de la **Conferencia Mundial sobre la Reducción de los Desastres**, realizada en Kobe, Japón, en enero de 2005, en los días posteriores a la ocurrencia del gran tsunami que afectó varios países del Asia, los representantes de 168 países aprobaron el *Marco de Acción de Hyogo para el 2005 – 2015 (MAH)*, que propone el *Aumento de la resiliencia de las naciones y las comunidades ante los desastres (EIRD, 2006)*. Para ello, se espera lograr en un período de 10 años *“la reducción considerable de las pérdidas ocasionadas por los desastres, tanto las de vidas como las de bienes sociales, económicos y ambientales de las comunidades y los países”*.



STATEMENT BY

**His Excellency Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser
Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar
to the United Nations**

BEFORE

**The Thematic Debate of
the United Nations General Assembly**

ON

Disaster Reduction

NEW YORK, 9 FEBRUARY 2011

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to extend to you my thanks and appreciation for convening this important meeting to remind us of the needs of disaster-prone countries for support from the international community, and I align myself with the statement delivered by His Excellency the Permanent Representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

In the context of the current economic and political conditions, not a short period of time goes by without us hearing about the outbreak of the occurrence of deadly natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, which affect the lives of thousands of people and result in large numbers of injured and displaced people. In addition to the victims that they claim and the displacement of affected people that they cause, these disasters bring about damages to agricultural crops and result in the destruction of basic infrastructures such as conduits of drinking water and sewage canals, educational and health facilities, as well as the spread of epidemics. The latter are likely to claim other scores of human lives, in addition to the fact that they undermine all the efforts made so far to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Chairman,

In many cases, the international organizations active in providing humanitarian assistance lack the financial resources that may enable them to carry out their missions in the best circumstances and to address each emergency early and decisively. For this purpose, the international community must mobilize its powers in order to turn the provision of adequate financial resources into one of its priorities in the pursuit of development, peace and security at the international level, mostly if we know that any delay in timely addressing any sudden humanitarian circumstances could turn a small crisis into a real and long-term disaster that could threaten the stability and security of the surrounding areas.

As the provision of financial assistance is one of the priorities of its foreign policy, the State of Qatar has not spared and will not spare any effort to contribute actively in all international projects aimed at providing early and decisive financial support that facilitates the tasks of international organizations working in the field of humanitarian relief and enabling them to play their role in a way that reduces the effects of natural disasters. The contribution of the State of Qatar extends to recovery and development, including through bilateral aid and through the United Nations system. The State of Qatar channels its donations through the Central Emergency Relief Fund, CERF, of whose Advisory Group it is a member.

Mr. Chairman,

As international community, we face great challenges in responding to emergencies, particularly natural disasters. I recall here that, on different occasions, we called for the promotion and development of a United Nations mechanism to provide humanitarian assistance and support in time of natural disasters and respond in a timely and adequate manner in proportion to the new threats of natural disasters. Disasters do

not wait for the preparations that begin after their occurrence, they are rather sudden, unpredictable, and difficult to deal with through the relief means currently available in some areas that are prone to natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, droughts, for the distress when it comes to seeking help from all segments of the international community, including civil society organizations.

Mr. Chairman,

The world is today threatened more than ever by devastating natural disasters. There is no doubt that climate change is one of the most important causes of the recurrence and violence of disasters, which hinder the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in many areas. This requires a real intervention and cooperation among developed countries to meet their obligations and to provide the financial and technical assistance necessary to support developing countries effectively and enable them to face the repercussions of this phenomenon. This should be in line with what is stipulated in the Cancun Consensus of the 16th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. In this regard, we note with concern the absence of adequate data about the effects of climate change in many developing countries, which may lead to poor response to natural disasters when they occur. Therefore, it is important that donor countries and the United Nations system, notably UNDP build the capacity of those States to enhance their expertise in the field of communications and assessment, as well as adaptation and mitigation.

Mr. Chairman,

According to forecasts issued by the United Nations and the World Bank, the dangers resulting from natural disasters, particularly drought and water scarcity will increase in the coming decades, which could affect agricultural production and food security and disrupt the process of growth in many developing countries, particularly those in the Arab region. Consequently, States should strive to integrate disaster risk reduction and adaptation to climate change into their national strategies for sustainable development.

In conclusion, I wish to refer to the importance of regional cooperation in disaster reduction and the role of regional organizations in this regard. We, in the State of Qatar have the National Vision 2030, which stipulates cooperation with the members of the Cooperation Council for the Arab Gulf States with a view to reducing the impacts of climate change.

Thank you.

Statement

INFORMAL THEMATIC DEBATE OF THE 65TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION - Wednesday, 9 February 2011 · New York

Panel 1- Invest today for safer tomorrow

Being confronted to the impact of the escalating number of natural disasters, there is a need for increased global efforts towards integrating disaster risk reduction and the concept of adaptation to climate change within both humanitarian operations and development cooperation.

The EU fully subscribes to the global ISDR agenda and its objectives. Strengthening the connection between climate change and natural disaster policies, and between adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies is essential in order to mitigate the impact of disasters.

We all know that investing in disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities before a disaster takes place pays significant dividends compared to paying for relief, recovery, and reconstruction afterwards. But we need to improve the knowledge base on disasters including their costs and we need clear and transparent assessments of the risks we face.

We fully share the Secretary General's view that there is evidence of greater investment needs in disaster risk reduction as expressed in the findings of the report on the Mid-Term Review of the Hyogo Framework to be discussed at the third Global Platform in May 2011.

However, we are confronted with an enormous gap between current and needed spending, the difficulty in increasing funds at the requested level of spending and the strong competition for funding between the different sectors.

As regards funding, we believe that links between development and climate change adaptation funding must be further developed. Disaster risk reduction approaches to building resilient economies and societies offer concrete opportunities for climate change adaptation and could be more clearly recognized in adaptation funding instruments.

Our commitment to integrate risk components into developing planning is highlighted by the 60 M€ contribution towards DRR mainstreaming in ACP countries that has been programmed through the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) managed by the World Bank.

We could also explore innovative instruments. In this regard, the EU is currently looking into a possibility of using some expertise in risk management that is held by the insurance and re-insurance industries.

In this context, we would be interested to hear the panellists views in the following questions:

1. How to adapt existing DRR and adaptation funding mechanisms and actions in order to respond more efficiently to the changing needs of the vulnerable people?
2. How can we improve and increase the capacity, role and activity of the mechanisms and platforms which have been created and bring in more partners, including regional and country-level representatives?

3. Which are the incentives for convincing policymakers, businesses and general public to invest in DRR/Climate change adaptation?
4. How can we ensure an efficient use of the funds while matching the absorption capacity of the beneficiary?

Speaking notes Toni Frisch

UN GA Thematic Debate

9 February 2011, New York

Main Messages

- Once a natural disaster occurs, the quick and adequate response is always a challenge. Therefore, **prevention and preparedness is essential**. If prevention measures and preparedness activities are being implemented on the ground before a disaster hits, the response and assistance will be much facilitated. Preparedness includes setting up structures for the response, to accommodate and facilitate response organizations, national emergency centers and coordination platforms.
- **One of the big challenges of DRR is its non-spectacular nature**. It is hardly visible when it is being implemented without the context of a big catastrophe, and it does not find the way into media and other common advocacy channels easily. For this reason, **the political will and the political agenda must be set through events such as are taking place today in the UN General Assembly in New York**. This is a unique opportunity to gain the attention and a place on the political agenda, to move forward on making DRR more visible and achievable, and to win the media also for reporting on medium- and long term effects.
- Within the field of DRR, **ISDR is the major player** who knows the challenges of promoting DRR. Switzerland is proud to be one of their supporters, and would like to express its respect for the work done and the results achieved so far. For example the initiative “making your city resilient” is a practical, operational campaign which combines short- and long term measures. A lot remains to be done, but we are confident that DRR is receiving the importance it needs to make a difference in the life of people.
- SDC takes this importance and responsibility very seriously, and **allocates about 15% of its humanitarian budget to DRR-related activities** and undertakings. This is even more important giving the fact that some countries lack proper resources to work on this kind of invisible work which takes a lot of in-depth understanding and political will to be accomplished – especially and understandably, if there are other pressing immediate needs to be met as well.
- In such difficult contexts, **finances and sometimes unfortunately even awareness or capacity for sound DRR programmes is lacking on the ground**. It is often only directly after a catastrophe that DRR is being taken into account. For this reason, it is paramount after a disaster to look forward and use the spur and the awareness of the moment to build up hope for the future, by establishing the needed but not yet existing and functional structures.
- It is our strong conviction that we **need to talk about operational issues on political level**. Implementation and realization of DRR activities, of prevention and preparedness must be the topic on the agenda – concrete work and facilitation of structures, making a difference in people’s life, as a much needed addition to the academic exchanges on causes and effects.
- Locally adapted solutions can be of very pragmatic nature, and must be promoted and partially also financed by the international community. The responsibility however lies with the host nation.
- In those first hours, it is of utmost importance that the major humanitarian actors are being trained or at least sensitized and aware to lay the foundations for DRR: to “build back better” must be part of humanitarian interventions.
- **Quality and professional standards** for aid agencies, government organizations and NGOs are needed, similar to the INSARAG guidelines that are being used for earthquake-response. To deliver sound and good aid is inherent in the humanitarian principles, and form an essential part of good humanitarian work and donorship.
- In the longer term, development actors will take over and carry on the work of their humanitarian colleagues – and here as well, the issue of DRR needs to play an important role to make sure that development is sustainable and the accomplishments will not be risked on one event.
- In this regard, we would like to **call for greater involvement of governments into the UN cluster system during the response on natural catastrophes**. More coordination, more

ownership, more investment of time is already an achievement when it comes to better programmes for DRR.

- In terms of DRR, we consider the shelter cluster to be one of the most important places to contribute to concrete, field-based work – also in cooperation with the Federation of the Red Cross and IOM. **The simple but strong slogan “Build Back Better”, must be the motto in the aftermath of a catastrophe.**
- Due to climatic changes, more natural disasters are happening – and in consequence also lead to more environmental threats and damages. As an example, Australia floods are not just destroying houses and streets, but also carry with them vehicles, garbage and other substances that can enter groundwater and have other, often negative long-term impacts. Lessons learnt from countries like Australia or Brazil must be used and shared with other countries and relevant organizations.
- **Environmental emergencies**, or, in other words: the consequences and the impact of disasters on the environment are usually underestimated and often ignored. **This implies that while response is certainly necessary and must be professional, the true and lasting focus must lie on prevention.**

INFORMAL THEMATIC DEBATE OF THE 65TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Panel Session: “Invest Today for a Safer Tomorrow”

Over the last years we were able to notice that civil protection in Mexico was held in some sort of a reactive system of intervention based mostly in the disaster as the trigger for the authority to take action. That encouraged the decision makers to propose several lines of action, among which stands out the necessity to amplify the governmental intervention, substituting the disaster as the center of the discussion and forward actions, by the risk, meaning, its analysis and understanding; seeking always for better financing formulas which guarantees no affectation to the budget exercise and also allows the growing of the financial instruments to prevent and attend natural disasters.

The introduction of the disaster risk management policy in Mexico, brings along the accomplishment of different tasks such as the adaptation of our legal framework; the definition of a financial favorable structure; the introduction of the disaster risk reduction conception and above all, to promote within the academic and scientific sector the development of research, studies, teaching and training about disaster risk management notion.

Over more than a decade, the Mexican legal framework has been achieving various financial instruments, which main purpose is to finance several necessary actions to prevent, mitigate and reduce the risk of natural disasters, as well as to attend the damages suffered by them.

Those instruments are divided in reactive and preventive ones:

Reactive instruments: The Natural Disasters Fund, know as “FONDEN” was created in 1996, which main purpose is to provide resources to the reconstruction of the public infrastructure and the housing of the low income population damaged by a natural disaster. FONDEN has a program within the federal budget by which it receives a certain amount of money every year and it also has a public trust fund, which holds the FONDEN economic reserves, and turns out to be the operational system thru which the resources are authorized.

FONDEN also has a humanitarian aid component, which facilitates food, shelter and other basic needs to safeguarding the life and health of the affected population.

Preventive instruments: One of the main achievements that Mexico has had is to keep transiting from an exceedingly reactive system to a preventive one. In order to that, by 2002 and 2003 two preventive programs were created by law: i) the Preventive Trust Fund (**FIPREDEN**), and ii) the Natural Disasters Prevention Fund (**FOPREDEN**); which purpose is to finance the execution of preventive projects promoted by federal entities, as well as by Mexican States, focusing on: risk identification; mitigation and disaster risk reduction; the promotion of the prevention and self protection culture, among others.

By 2008 both preventive instruments had become obsolete, presenting some deficiencies and gaps in their operation process, demonstrating the necessity to make a structural change in their functioning. So at the end of 2010, we accomplished to merge both instruments in one new “Natural Disasters Prevention Fund”, which collects all the virtues and advantages of the old separate instruments, suppressing their defects, contributing that way to the sustainable growth of the investment in more and much better risk reduction actions.

Besides that, being consequently with the marked transition that we suffer during the last decade regarding the disaster risk reduction conception, at the beginning of the present administration, we were able to include in the National Development Plan, the mandatory to preserve the physical integrity and patrimony of all Mexicans, as well as to transform the disaster risk management in a priority public policy of sustainable development, focused on the knowledge of the risk in order to achieve its mitigation and reduction.

CHALLENGES IN THE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION FIELD

In Mexico, our goal in a medium period of time is to achieve a significant decrease in the costs to attend natural disasters and by that accomplish a bigger investment in the disaster risk reduction field.

It's urgent and necessary to equilibrate the scale between the reactive expenditure and the investment on disaster risk reduction. For that, we are designing and implementing some new strategies to attack the structural causes of facing major disasters when a natural phenomenon occurs and by that seeking to strength the resilience capacities of an organized society based on a proper disaster risk management thru the following aspects:

- Adjust and adapt the Mexican legal framework to turn the disaster risk management in a priority transversal public policy for all national plans, programs and projects regarding public infrastructure in our country, in order to achieve that the investment in new infrastructure and in the reconstruction of the damaged one, be applied in an intelligent way, with the previous analysis of the risks, to finally manage to reduce and mitigate it.
- To reorient the foundations on which is based the planning and budgeting of the public expenditure in the matter of investment on infrastructure like a high-priority aspect in the development of our country, and
- To eradicate the social construction of risks and in a preventive and anticipated way, seek for the public resources to be applied in a diligent way in the infrastructure that counts with the sufficient analysis to guarantee its strength and resistance before the hazards that represents the natural phenomena, guaranteeing by that the well-being and security of the population.

The disaster risk management, understood like an investment, will represent for the government and for the society an enormous saving, amount that should be destined to the sustainable growth of our country.

On the other hand, while we managed to balance the scale between the enormous cost in the attention of the disasters, against the minor investment in risk reduction, we managed to keep adapting the reaches of the Natural Disasters Fund (FONDEN), so no matter that its main purpose is to be a reactive instrument, it could cover diverse aspects focused in risk reduction, like:

1. **Improvements and additions.**- in the reconstruction of the public infrastructure affected by a disaster, its mandatory to include mitigation and disaster risk reduction measures, through regulated construction norms that reduces their vulnerability before future threats. We are estimating that during the reconstruction processes, the FONDEN is investing approximately 30% of their resources in mitigation and risk reduction measures, to avoid future damages.
2. **Specialized equipment.**- Its possible to acquire with FONDEN resources equipment of transport, communication, early warning and any type of equipment that contributes to fortify the structures and capacities of the federal entities for a better and more effective attention and administration of the emergencies and disasters.
3. **Finance the constitution of local funds.**- FONDEN rules allows that the savings of the reconstruction programs be used like an initial contribution so that the Mexican states can constitute a local fund for risk reduction and for the attention of natural disasters, in order to count on with an instrument to attend the more frequent disasters but less intense.
4. **Risk Transfer Instruments.**- Another main target of the federal government is to accomplished that all federal and local infrastructure, are properly insured and by that, seek to avoid the enormous disbursements that in some occasions must carry out FONDEN and the local governments, before a disaster of great magnitude.

For it, FONDEN foresee the possibility of acquiring risk transfer instruments, such as:

- Parametric insurance and cat bonds;
- Excess of loss insurance to protect the FONDEN trust patrimony;
- Economic support to the local states to accomplish the development of an adequate risk transfer strategy.

The target in a medium term is for the FONDEN's budget to be destined mostly to pay the coverage of catastrophic risk transfer instruments and retain a minor sum for those more recurrent and less destructive events.

By this way, the FONDEN will have an enormous capacity to confront catastrophic events of great magnitude without affecting the public finances.

CONCLUSIONS

- We must continue promoting the legal reforms to incorporate the disaster risk management as a national public policy, seeking to avoid the execution of the public budget without the previous analysis of the disaster risks.
- We must keep fortifying the financial instruments for the prevention of natural disasters, until we obtain the balance between the cost to attend the disasters and the investment applied in prevention and disaster risk reduction;
- We have to carry on a permanent work of massive diffusion and training about the disaster risk reduction and the prevention and self-protection culture, in order to grow day by day in the society the knowledge of these concepts, so it can be introduced in their daily practices;
- We need to conclude the transit from an intervention of the authorities based on the disaster as the center of all the actions, to other sustained in the analysis and understanding of its generator that is the presence of the risk, and
- Manage to accomplish a complete risk transfer administration of the natural disasters to which Mexico are exposed, looking for its diversification between the different financial instruments available in the international market, so before the presence of catastrophic disasters, the national public finances are not affected and therefore our economic stability.

CITIES AT RISK - DISASTER RISK REDUCTION PRESENTATION

By: Mary Jane C. Ortega, Secretary General, CITYNET

– for the Informal Thematic Debate at the United Nations General Assembly held in New York
on February 9, 2011

When a person commits a crime, and he is penalized, people would say, “HE DESERVES IT.”

When a person is innocent of a crime and gets punished, the victim will cry out for JUSTICE.

When a developing city with a small carbon footprint becomes a victim of disasters brought on by global warming and climate change, he cries out for ‘JUSTICE!’.

Fingers point to those with large carbon footprints, but would finger pointing bring on JUSTICE?

We have seen the recent disasters strike recently, and we have seen that disaster does not choose whether you have a large or small carbon footprint. It just strikes and we feel for the victims, forget to finger point, and instead are moved to action.

CITYNET ESPOUSES LOCAL ACTION FOR THESE GLOBAL PROBLEMS. WHAT IS CITYNET?

It is a network of local governments and partners in Asia Pacific established in 1987, with 120 members covering 22 countries. Our vision is to improve the quality of life of the urban dwellers. We have four clusters for infrastructure, Millennium Development Goals, Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change. Since we are here to discuss DISASTER RISK REDUCTION, let me share with you that we advocate a bifocal approach through mitigation and adaptation.

Our strategy is through CITY TO CITY COOPERATION. In 2002, CITYNET received the UNITED NATIONS HABITAT SCROLL OF HONOUR AWARD for one of our approaches – CITY TO CITY COOPERATION. We do not just have a bilateral cooperation but instead, we bring in all the actors, the international community, the donor agencies, the national government, with the local government strengthened by its local actors, the local officials, the academe, the private sector, the NGOs, and the citizens themselves.

I am glad to see the Mayor of Banda Aceh here in this panel discussion because they are the models of our C2C Cooperation.

-Yokohama and Banda Aceh cooperation on waterworks management and improvement of water distribution

-Yokohama, Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Banda Aceh on urban planning for reconstruction

-Yokohama and Banda Aceh on local market renovation

-Construction of Community Centers in Banda Aceh, Galle and Moratuwa in Sri Lanka

-Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Management Plan with PIEDAR, an NGO member and Islamabad

As we can see, the problem was brought about by a global situation but the solution was found on the local level, with the assistance of all actors found vertically, such as the international and national level, as well as horizontally, among the local actors.

Our members, ; like Seoul is helping Palembang and Jakarta on the public transport system while Mumbai has the best practice of their flood preparedness program, and Makati City in the Philippines for the earthquake resilient city plan.

Asian cities are encountering increased disasters from natural causes and the risks are made more acute because of poverty, poor infrastructure, poor capacity to handle risks, poor early warning, and population increases that contribute to high density in vulnerable areas.

What we have to do is to increase awareness among urban dwellers, intensify information campaign, push for good governance and adopt good urban planning, networking. When I was mayor of our city of San Fernando, I was also the Chairman of the Provincial Red Cross Chapter, and was able to coordinate relief operations as well as training communities to be resilient; I joined the Philippine Coast Guard Auxiliary and had easy access to people who could help in the safety of lives at sea, I closely coordinated with the provincial government, the national government, with donor agencies, because as we say in CITYNET, TOGETHER WE CAN DO MORE. LET US MAKE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION A PRIORITY OF EACH ONE.

In conclusion, let me share with you a story of a group of Latin American mayors whom I met during a World Council of Mayors for Early Warning held in Bonn, Germany. While exchanging ideas, one lady mayor from Costa Rica said, “ WHY DON’T WE BECOME SISTER CITIES?”

To this, a mayor of El Salvador said, “WHAT? MARRIAGE BETWEEN TWO POOR PERSONS CANNOT SUCCEED. SISTERHOOD CITIES BETWEEN TWO POOR CITIES? THAT IS NOT FEASIBLE.”

But I said, , “WHY NOT? IF WE CAN GET RICH GODPARENTS, IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE. AND WITH OUR COMMITMENT, WE CAN SUCCEED.” We then appeal to you at the United Nations, the UNHABITAT, the developed cities in the developed countries, PLEASE BE OUR GODPARENTS.

Let our CITY TO CITY COOPERATION between two developing cities succeed.

Investing in DRR

1. Prevention of disasters is a must: who would question immunization or campaigns of awareness in the health sector? It is not only a factor of sustainability in development, it is essential for the achievement of MDGs and a worthwhile financial investment, as 1\$ invested in DRR equals on average 7\$ in reconstruction costs – not counting loss of human lives
2. Because levels of preparedness to cope with natural hazards are unequal, with most developed countries more resilient than poorest, international cooperation is particularly vital, to share data (weather forecast, early warning systems...), prevention methods and experiences. And to avoid duplication of efforts made at costs incurred elsewhere. Stress efficiency of South-South cooperation
3. Prevention is a mindset that should govern development assistance programs: whether in bilateral or multilateral agreements, the approach of prevention should be mainstreamed in all decisions made
4. Parliamentarians and other elected representatives of the people at all levels, national, provincial and local, at the most grassroots level, all play an important role. They are in close contact with their constituents and know their problems, they are useful agents to disseminate information about and train inhabitants on preventive measures. The Inter-Parliamentary Union-IPU in cooperation with the UN ISDR has published a DRR Kit for Parliamentarians
5. The challenge for all of us is to allocate **systematically, since its very conception**, a certain percentage of any development budget to prevention, to DRR.

Statement Thomas R. Loster, Munich Re Foundation, Munich, Germany

Thematic Debate of the UN General Assembly on Disaster Risk Reduction
“Invest today for a Safer Tomorrow”, New York City, USA, 9 February 2011

Natural disasters are increasing dramatically, affecting many economies and millions of people. This applies throughout the world, without exception. Many hundreds of loss events are registered each year by disaster experts, 2010 being with 950 a record year. In Munich Re's NatCatSERVICE, a global loss database, the ten-year annual average is 785 events.

1. Investing in catastrophe prevention pays off, as noted here on the panel. The tragic earthquake in Haiti on 12 January 2010, where the death toll far exceeded 200,000, is deeply embedded in our memories. In 2010, however, another earthquake occurred, giving cause for hope. The Maule earthquake, which occurred in Chile on 27 February 2010, released 500 times as much energy as the Haiti quake. Since Chile's last major tremor in 1985, 12,300 buildings had been constructed, only five of which collapsed in the 2010 quake thanks to strict compliance with the building codes now in place. This example shows that investing in solid construction methods, establishing suitable building codes and strictly adhering to them pays off.
2. Where flooding is concerned, there are good examples illustrating the profitability of investment in prevention and flood protection. Year after year, billions of dollars in losses have been prevented thanks to operations carried out by the US Army Corps of Engineers in the USA. My own country, Germany, also illustrates the huge leverage investments can exert. For instance, the city of Hamburg was flooded when it was struck by a severe storm surge in February 1962. The economic loss was estimated to be around US\$1.5bn (in 2009 values). From 1962 to 2012, more than US\$ 2bn were invested in dykes and other defence measures. Since 1962, the water level that caused major losses during 1962 has been exceeded on several occasions – indeed by a substantial amount on three of those – but there was no significant damage.
3. Climate change is already evident in natural catastrophe statistics. Munich Re's NatCatSERVICE data show a greater increase in atmospheric events such as storms and floods than in geological events like earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. From 1980 to 2010, the number of storms and floods increased by some 300% or more, whilst earthquakes and other geological events rose by only 50%.
4. Climate negotiations in the political arena, such as the world climate summits (COPs) that are part of the UNFCCC process, are focusing more and more on adaptation. Insurance is one element of adaptation, and can be an important

coping measure. However, the issue at stake is not just premium income or claims payments. In any case, money cannot compensate for individual tragedies.

Insurance and insurance-based solutions

- put a price tag on risk and make risk visible: where there is insurance, we usually find in-depth hazard research;
- can help people, regions and governments to recover faster and return to normal and to economic development;
- serve prevention, which is a key element. Innovative solutions for developing countries are underway, but many are still in their fledgling stages.

5. The UN declared 2005 the "International Year of Microcredit". This impetus has had a significant impact. Microinsurance solutions are currently being drafted and introduced in many emerging and developing countries. It is possible to reach even the poorest of the poor in regions such as Ethiopia, where, under the HARITA project, poor farmers can become involved in prevention measures that provide protection against weather extremes. They receive compensation under a cash-for-work programme and are given access to microfinance services. Governments in the Caribbean can also insure themselves against extreme events by means of the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF). At present, 16 countries are members of this pool.
6. Risk awareness and prevention are key! Investments in technology are important for warning of oncoming disasters (e.g. the 2004 tsunami and creation of a tsunami warning system in its aftermath), but we also need greater involvement of the people at risk. Disasters tend to teach us that awareness among people at the grass-roots level is crucial. Capacity-building and education are necessary and in line with the UN Development Goals. We need approaches from both ends: top-down (i.e. political frameworks, international and national strategies) and bottom-up (projects involving people at risk, in order to meet their needs and to foster awareness). It is necessary to link efforts and create partnerships, and especially to link institutions and governmental bodies that have the same target. Furthermore, the creation of public-private partnerships is important. The challenges of today and of the future can be solved if we combine our efforts.