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Considerations on the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction

Outcomes of the Second Arab Regional Forum on Disaster Risk Reduction 14–16 September 2014, Sharm El Sheikh, Arab Republic of Egypt

Note by the secretariat*

A. Declaration issued by the Second Arab Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

1. In its resolution 67/209 adopted in December 2012, the General Assembly, looking forward to the regional forums to be held in 2014, stressed the importance of coordination at the regional level within the framework of the preparatory process for the Third World Conference.

2. The Second Arab Forum/Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction was held from 14 to 16 September 2014 at Sharm El Sheikh in the Arab Republic of Egypt and issued the following Declaration as a basic outcome of the Conference.

* The submission of this document was delayed due to the need to hold internal consultations.

Preamble

The Second Arab Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction was held from 14 to 16 September 2014 at Sharm El Sheikh in the Arab Republic of Egypt under the patronage of H.E. the Egyptian Prime Minister and was kindly hosted by the South Sinai Governorate in coordination with the Egyptian Information and Decision Support Centre and the League of Arab States.

The Conference was attended by more than 400 participants from 19 Arab States, including Arab ministers, mayors, governors, parliamentarians, representatives of international and non-governmental organizations, academic, scientific and technological institutions and representatives of children, youth and civil society. The State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan also attended and called for effective participation by the Arab States and their leaders in the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction due to be held in Sendai, Japan, from 14 to 18 March 2015.

The Conference reviewed the disaster risk reduction measures that had been taken in the Arab region during the previous decade, as well as the evaluation of the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action and the challenges and gaps that had been identified and needed to be addressed in future. It also discussed the global target of developing a new post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction, the Arab region's recommendations in that regard and the need for a comprehensive disaster risk reduction approach within the framework of the various international consultations and the post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

The participants stressed the importance of responding in an earnest manner to urban hazards in the Arab region and enabling cities to cope with disasters. They also emphasized the role of science and technology in disaster risk reduction and the need for closer collaboration and involvement by Arab scientists and researchers through a regional mechanism linked to the Global Science and Technology Advisory Group on Disaster Risk Reduction. The Conference prioritized the need for States to promote risk-informed public and private investments in order to identify the basic risk drivers and present and future risk-related trends in the various vital sectors and industries, as well as the need to formulate ancillary policy frameworks in this regard. The participants also discussed the challenges associated with climate change and its relationship to disaster risk reduction and the changing landscape of Arab regional food security.

The participants stressed the need for disaster risk reduction to be coordinated between national and local governments and highlighted the primary role of local authorities in disaster risk management and reduction. The Conference welcomed the contributions of children, youth and civil society organizations to the dialogue on disaster risk reduction and their proposals for the post-2015 global framework. The Conference also discussed the role played by the United Nations through the implementation of its Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience. The participants also emphasized the effective role of women in disaster risk reduction and recommended the integration of a gender perspective into the post-2015 framework for action. Emphasis was placed on the need for effective disaster preparedness and further endeavours and measures to improve disaster resilience and implement the recommendations of the post-2015 framework for action.

Declaration

Second Arab Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction City of Sharm El Sheikh, Arab Republic of Egypt, 14–16 September 2014

Sharm El Sheikh Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction 16 September 2014

We, the Arab ministers, heads of governmental delegations, mayors, parliamentarians and representatives of regional and international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations participating in the Second Arab Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in the city of Sharm El Sheikh, Arab Republic of Egypt, from 14 to 16 September 2014, express our gratitude and appreciation to the leadership, the Government and the people of the Arab Republic of Egypt and to the South Sinai Governorate for hosting the Second Arab Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. We also wish to thank the League of Arab States and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) for their effective contribution in ensuring the successful outcome of the Conference's work.

We welcome the hosting by Japan of the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, which will be held in Sendai in March 2015. We also thank Japan for its kind invitation to the heads of State of the Arab countries to participate in the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and look forward to the results and outcomes of that important conference in 2015.

We stress the importance of disaster risk reduction and declare the following:

Recognizing that:

1. Commendable Arab endeavours and achievements have been made in the field of disaster risk reduction, particularly through the adoption of the Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction and its Implementation Plan and the establishment of several national platforms in Arab States;

2. Various parts of the Arab region are exposed to geological hazards such as earthquakes and landslides, in addition to climate change-related hazards such as droughts, sandstorms, flash and other floods, snowstorms, extreme variations in temperature, forest fires, locust migrations and tropical storms;

3. Disaster losses are compounded due to the lack of a database and updated information on risk exposure in the Arab region;

4. Lack of resources, weakness or non-availability of early warning systems and infrastructural vulnerability increase the magnitude of disaster losses in lives, livelihoods, assets, the economy and the environment;

5. Rapid urbanization, environmental degradation, water scarcity, demographic structural changes and migration trends, in addition to secondary risks associated with population displacement, disease outbreaks, pandemic influenza, conflicts and turmoil in the Arab region constitute multifaceted challenges that negatively impact the capacity of Arab States to reduce and manage disaster risk;

6. Only 14.5 per cent of the total area of the Arab region is arable due to water scarcity, desertification and land degradation;

7. Between 1980 and 2008, more than 37 million persons were affected by drought, earthquakes, flash and other floods and storms and the losses to the Arab economy were estimated at around US$ 20 billion;

8. Ecosystems play an important role that can influence the disaster risk reduction system by supporting livelihoods and basic needs;

9. Enhanced awareness and knowledge of disaster risk reduction at all levels among all stakeholders and decision makers is key to generating commitment and transformation from a culture of coexistence with risk to an awareness of risk that will promote a culture of safety and action to reduce the risks.

Recalling:

1. The International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1989), the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World (1994), the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (1999) and the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005);

2. The (Badgdad) Arab Summit resolution O.S. 563 (23) of 29 March 2012 adopting the Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2020;

3. The activities organized in the Arab region by the League of Arab States, some Arab States and UNISDR on the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction, taking into consideration the comments made by Arab States on the draft recommendations and the outcomes of the consultation meetings in the Arab region;

4. The outcomes of the First Arab Regional Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (Aqaba, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 19-21 March 2013);

5. The Aqaba Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction in Arab cities (Aqaba, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 21 March 2013);

6. The outcomes of the first preparatory meeting for the Third United Nations Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (Geneva, Switzerland, 14-15 July 2014);

7. The statement of the Major Group for Children and Youth, including Middle Eastern and North African children in a climate change coalition, and the statement by civil society organizations on disaster risk reduction in the Arab States;

and the fact that, in keeping with the expected outcome of the current Hyogo Framework for Action, the new post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction aims to achieve a significant reduction in disaster losses in lives and livelihoods and in social, economic and environmental assets of communities and States.

Taking note of **the pre-zero draft of the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction and its following three strategic objectives:**

1. The prevention of disaster risks, which requires measures to enhance growth and development mechanisms to address increase in exposure and vulnerability;

2. The reduction of existing disaster risk, which requires measures to address and reduce exposure and vulnerability, including preparedness to respond to the natural disasters threatening the region;

3. Strengthening the disaster resilience of individuals, communities, institutions and States, which requires social, economic and environmental measures to enable individuals, communities, institutions and States to absorb loss, minimize impact and recover.

Taking into account **the disaster risk reduction challenges facing the Arab region, we shall endeavour to:**

1. Strengthen political will and establish an effective joint institutional base for disaster risk reduction within the framework of a national system governed by transparency and accountability which defines roles and responsibilities and specifies the national resources needed to support such a system;

2. Build a culture of safety and prevention and raise public awareness as a priority for disaster risk reduction decision makers at all levels and particularly in local communities and local governmental authorities;

3. Promote decentralization and good governance in disaster risk reduction;

4. Develop an appropriate institutional framework, such as a committee or commission, provided with adequate resources and delegated powers to fulfil its disaster risk reduction responsibilities;

5. Strengthen local capacities and grant local authorities some freedom of action within the national framework;

6. Adopt and implement more effective measures to address drought and achieve a higher degree of water security and food security by devising and implementing integrated strategies and policies, informed by risk and vulnerability assessments, with a view to strengthening resilience to drought;

7. Build national partnerships for disaster resilience in order to help local communities to prepare for disaster reduction impacts on livelihoods and the economy through social safety nets, insurance and special indemnity programmes and the funding of microfinance schemes;

8. Integrate disaster risk reduction efforts with endeavours to cope with climate change in order to promote resilience, enhance agrometeorological/hydrological services and strengthen linkages between agrometeorology, disaster risk reduction and climate change administrations;

9. Implement a number of measures within a framework of effective partnerships between the public and private sectors and civil society to improve urban planning, upgrade the provision of services and enhance the sustainability of Arab cities by improving the living conditions of the poor in urban areas; and develop urban programmes and bold local initiatives to address multisectoral obstacles limiting the functionality of Arab cities;

10. Promote the principle of green architecture to achieve the optimal use of resources, minimize negative impacts on the environment and contribute to risk resilience;

11. Develop and strengthen national and regional early warning systems to identify, assess and monitor risk and to assess vulnerability levels of vital infrastructure and high-risk areas in order to identify options for disaster resilience;

12. Focus on scientific research and the promotion of technical means to assess risk, monitor and develop hazard maps, analyse vulnerability using GIS and remote sensing tools, and enhance national risk assessment capacities;

13. Develop a regional mechanism linking Arab scientists to the Global Science and Technology Advisory Group on Disaster Risk Reduction with a view to strengthening the commitment and participation of the academic and scientific communities and mobilizing science and technology to support disaster risk reduction measures;

14. Raise awareness in the insurance sector in order to encourage it to apply good practices such as the disaster risk insurance available in some Arab States;

15. Mobilize private sector resources to address the impact of disaster risk on the sector's performance. Risk assessment, like environmental impact assessment, should form an integral part of the economic feasibility studies for any investment project in the public or private sectors;

16. Ensure the social responsibility of the private sector and promote the development of partnerships with civil society in disaster risk management;

17. Develop national financing mechanisms, from which local authorities can benefit, to reduce disaster risks and manage disaster impacts;

18. Review and enhance the implementation of the Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2020 in a manner consistent with the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction and the sustainable development agenda;

19. Support the Technical Secretariat of the League of Arab States to strengthen its capacity to monitor the implementation by States of the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction, the Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction and the outcomes of Arab conferences on disaster risk reduction.

In the light of the above, **the Arab region stresses the importance of taking the following elements into account in the draft post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction:**

1. The post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction should outline the measures and actions needed to reduce existing risks and risk exposure. It should identify approaches and guiding principles for growth and sustainable development that integrate disaster risk reduction and strengthen resilience.

2. The framework should be practical and based on public policies and strategies designed to enhance the safety and resilience of communities and preserve lives and livelihoods. It should strengthen accountability and implementation mechanisms and ensure a multi-hazard approach.

3. The new framework for disaster risk reduction should apply to all States without exception and should pay special attention to the occupied Arab territories.

4. It should focus on issues related to water insecurity and food insecurity, impacts of climate change, extreme climatic events and droughts and should show special concern for drylands and arid zones.

5. There should be greater coherence between the various internationally negotiated processes of the post-2015 agenda (Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Convention on Climate Change, Sustainable Development Goals).

6. The post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction should include appropriate and adequate means of implementation and follow-up, such as the provision of financial resources, technology development and transfer and capacity building.

7. The post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction should include emerging technological risks related to natural hazards.

8. The League of Arab States should be supported in its monitoring of the fulfilment of the commitments of member States and the implementation of regional disaster risk reduction programmes.

9. In accordance with the Rio Principles, and particularly the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, the developed countries should undertake to help the developing countries to intensify their disaster risk reduction efforts and build resilience.

10. International, regional and national financial institutions should undertake to support the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction by providing States and communities with financial assistance to build their disaster resilience.

11. Stakeholders such as the private sector and civil society should undertake to implement the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction and ensure that their actions do not put communities and individuals at risk.

12. Disaster risk reduction should be viewed as a necessity to safeguard lives, assets and livelihoods of communities while respecting human rights.

13. Disaster risk management requires the active and non-discriminatory involvement of all segments of society, including women, children, youth, persons with disabilities and the elderly, in the formulation and implementation of disaster risk reduction policies.

14. UNISDR and its regional offices should play a greater role as an independent entity with sufficient resources to enable it to support States and regional organizations, strengthen coordination mechanisms and enhance the capacities and potential of States to implement disaster risk reduction measures.

15. States should declare their commitment to implement the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction.

[The Arabic text is the officially approved version of the Sharm El Sheikh Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction of 16 September 2014.]