



Statement by the UN Major Group for Children and Youth including the MENA Children in a Changing Climate coalition¹

*2nd Arab Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction
September 14th - 16th 2014, Sharm-El-Sheik, Egypt*

We recognize that children and youth are one of the most vulnerable groups to disasters, climate change, fragility and conflict. In many regions of the world, the health, education and social wellbeing of children and youth are impacted by poverty, protracted crises, recurrent displacement, poor infrastructure and inadequate basic social services. And yet, children and youth are also powerful agents for change.

Together with partners in the region, the UN Major Group of Children and Youth, including the MENA Children in a Changing Climate Coalition, has undertaken a consultative process that gathered the voices of children and youth to represent their views, needs and priorities in the post-2015 agenda.

Since the establishment of an Arab Regional Platform in 2008, progress on DRR has been made in the region. The HFA monitor reports enhanced political and national commitment to risk reduction, development of institutional mechanisms, national platforms and strategies, enhanced early warning systems and progress in building preparedness and response capacities. Countries do, however, also report relatively limited progress on education and public awareness as well as on the collection, availability and accessibility of data and information on risk, vulnerabilities and impacts, tools and methodologies for disaster risk reduction, and multi-risk and multi-hazard approaches. Commitments have however been made to youth and children. The 'Arab Strategy for DRR 2020' promotes awareness of DRR in schools, hospital preparedness and public health infrastructure; it also supports the involvement of children in the development of disaster preparedness plans. No specific mention however is made of the specific risks to youth and children nor of their role as agents for change.

Since the first Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in 2007, the MGCY and its members, including child-centered agencies and youth organizations, have worked to raise the profile of children and youth both as those affected by disasters and as actors in risk reduction and resilience building. The Children's Charter for DRR, developed and endorsed by more than 1,200 children around the world, was launched at the 2011 Global Platform. The charter consists of the children's five priorities for DRR which include: safe schools; child protection; information and participation; safe community infrastructure and 'building back better, safer and fairer'; and reaching the most vulnerable.

In the MENA region, two key processes inform the position of children and youth. A country level consultation process with youth and children was held from January through to April, 2014. The outcome was that 1,803 girls, boys and youth, aged between 7 and 25 were consulted in nine countries in the MENA region including Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Morocco, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan and

¹ The CCC is a global coalition but in MENA is made up of Save the Children International, World Vision International, UNICEF as well as IOM and WHO.

Libya. The key results were synthesized into key messages and themes representing the nine countries consulted.

A regional consultation was also held with youth from the MENA region prior to the 2nd Arab Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction. During the consultation youth expressed their priorities and commitments to DRR. The youth stated: we are ready to take responsibility in making our cities and future resilient’.

The outcomes of both consultations with children and youth has determined the position of young people both in terms of advancing DRR with the MENA region and in shaping the post 2015 DRR Framework.

We take this opportunity at the 2nd Arab Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction to present our key priorities:

- 1.To protect the rights of all people during and after disasters and conflicts, and in fragile environments;
- 2.To ensure safety and security for displaced children and youth;
- 3.To increase national and sub-national investments to promote DRR in development plans, including in basic social services such as health, protection and education;
- 4.To support children and youth’s active and meaningful participation in governance;
- 5.To provide safe quality education and ensure safe spaces for children and youth;
- 6.To empower children and youth with the skills, confidence, and knowledge to strengthen their resilience;
- 7.To address the particular risks in this region posed by climate change, water scarcity and environmental degradation on children’s health and well-being.

Furthermore, we seek to highlight the linkages between disaster risk, conflict, fragility and poverty.

We call upon stakeholders in this forum to concretely support these priorities, including by establishing targets and indicators in national development plans and the post-2015 DRR framework;

Children and youth in the region express their commitments to be proactive in promoting disaster risk reduction in their communities, their surroundings and within their families.

Thank you.

16 September 2014