Fourth Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction 2013

**“Invest Today for a Safer Tomorrow”**

19 to 23 May 2013

Geneva, Switzerland

Official Statement from

**Bangladesh Disaster Preparedness Centre (BDPC)**

**Right Investment for Safer Tomorrow of the Disadvantaged Communities**

**in the Developing Countries**

Assalamu alaikum.

**Respected Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We, in Bangladesh Disaster Preparedness Centre, dream and struggle to achieve a disaster free world, particularly the disaster risk reduction of the disadvantaged communities living in the developing countries.

Bangladesh Disaster Preparedness Centre (BDPC) is a small non-profit organization in Bangladesh working for, and with the disadvantaged communities in their efforts to establish their rights to reduce their risks to disasters.

While BDPC has its institutional existence for the last twenty years, the organisation is enshrined with the long experience of over forty years and valuable insights of individuals who earned recognition at home and abroad for their professional excellences and contribution to disaster risk management.

**Honourable Chair,**

The Global Community has very rightly appreciated that the developing regions are more vulnerable to hazards and the impacts are disproportionately higher compared to that in the Western World. A concrete example is the cyclone of 1991 with wind speed of 225 km per hour that killed over 138,000 people in Bangladesh. Wheras, just a year later, Hurricane Andrew with even higher wind velocity (285 km/h) left a human casualty of only 18 in the United States of America. So, it is not only the fury of any hazard which is responsible for the loss of life and property, but there are other factors such as poor physical infrastructure, high vulnerability, low capacity, and most important of all, the poor state of governance. Again, in any developing country, it is the poor and the disadvantaged communities who are always affected by any disaster, but not the rich and the powerfuls.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am very encouraged with the theme of this Fourth Session of the Global Platform – **Invest Today for a Safer Tomorrow**. To **address** the theme, we must ask ourselves two basic questions. Number 1, **where the investment should be made?** Let’s take a quick stock of what have we done in last one decade or so.

Even after the adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in 2005 and the declarations made at the last three Sessions of GPDRR, billions of dollars are being spent in the name of disaster management. The major areas of investment are post-disaster emergency relief and rehabilitation operations, physical infrastructural developments, procurement of equipments and machineries, capacity development of practitioners and also on very highly paid “**consultants**”. We Must understand that this Trickle-down Theory has never worked in the developing countries, and will not work in the future. Very insignificant investments are made for sustainable reduction of the risks of the poor and the disadvantaged communities.

Question number 2 that we should ask, is “**Safer tomorrow, for whom?**” **For us or for them?** People like us are never affected by any disaster. Rather disaster creates opportunity for us. If we want to make safer tomorrow for them, we must understand their real problems. Disaster is not their problem, but poverty is. There is an urgent need to appreciate that the poor in the developing countries have no other option but to live in high disaster risk areas, only to earn a living. And they are heavily exploited economically, socially and even politically.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Disasters should not be seen in isolation. Any effort aiming at sustainable disaster risk management **Must address**, let me repeat, **Must address** **the root causes of the problems.** It must contribute to the establishment of good governance in economic, social, cultural and political spheres. The focus should be on the **empowerment** of the communities at risk. It should not be a top-down approach, but a bottom-up one. The communities should be capacitated so that they themselves can identify and prioritize their risks, plan for mitigation and treat the risk factors. Because only they know where the shoe pinches. Ultimately, through using the national and international instruments e.g. Universal Human Rights, Right to Information, Social Accountability tools etc., they should be empowered enough to have direct access to and control over the public resources allocated for them. This is the only solution for breaking the vicious cycle of poverty and disaster, and bring sustained order in this unjust world.

**Honourable Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen**,

Deep in our hearts, we cherish the dream that the collective actions of the global leaders of disaster risk management, who have gathered today in Geneva, will one-day take us to a level where communities are capacitated and empowered to reduce their own risks and establish their rights to service. Till we make our dream into reality, we in Bangladesh Disaster Preparedness Centre, are determined, are committed to struggle everyday for a Safer Tomorrow for The Poor and The Dis-advantaged Communities in the developing countries.

Thank you very much for your patient hearing.

Presented by Mr. Muhammad Saidur Rahman, Director, Bangladesh Disaster Preparedness Centre in Geneva on 22 May 2013.

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