



Statement by the Italian Delegation to the fourth session
Of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

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Excellencies, distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen:

It is a pleasure to participate today for the second time in the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction since I was appointed as Head of the Italian Civil Protection in early 2011.

First of all, I would like to express to UN ISDR my appreciation for the valuable efforts exerted for organising the fourth session of the Global Platform, which takes place during a critical phase for the international community, with its changing geopolitical and economic environment and an increasing number of natural and man-made disasters occurring worldwide.

This fourth session represents a crucial opportunity for discussing the future of disaster risk reduction, as we are entering the last two years of implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 “Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters”. Therefore, we all should reflect, with a critical attitude, upon the results achieved so far, shortcomings and expectations for the future.

Building on previous experiences such as the International Decade for Disaster Reduction and the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World, the Hyogo Framework for Action has provided Countries with a comprehensive and flexible guidance for progressing in a very complex field such as disaster risk reduction. With the continuous support provided by UN ISDR - the most active advocate of its concrete implementation - the HFA has made possible the development of deeper knowledge and further exchange of information, practical activity and policy improvement.

We do believe that the strategic goals and priorities for action identified in the Hyogo Framework for Action will remain very useful for the future. Indeed, and keeping in due consideration the current global economic trends, making different stakeholders effectively work together - governmental actors, the scientific community, local administrations, the private sector and the civil society - will require further efforts. For this reason, we highly appreciate the open consultative process that is taking place nowadays thanks to UNISDR. Inclusiveness is always an asset and we want to particularly highlight the relevant role of the regional consultations organized in the last months for the run up to the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction.

Let me now share with you a few inputs for future developments.

First of all, we are firmly convinced that technological disasters should be fully included within the Post-2015 Framework for Action, in order to promote the development of comprehensive disaster risk reduction policies based on a multi-risk approach.

Secondly, the existing Framework for Action could be improved through the inclusion of more practical targets and indicators, in order to facilitate a more complete assessment of the results achieved, for example in terms of transparency, education and information to the population.

Third, there is no “one size fits all” model one can rely on in terms of disaster risk reduction governance, since every Country will adopt the most appropriate according to its own priorities and needs. Nevertheless, effective integration of DRR into national and local policies and plans requires a clear identification of roles and responsibilities. Therefore, more efforts should be made to promote an exchange of lessons learnt and good practices. In this regard, for the sake of a more effective implementation of disaster risk reduction worldwide, we truly encourage the reinforcement of UN ISDR capabilities and resources.

Finally, one field in which the Post-2015 Framework for Action should progress in, is ensuring that a higher degree of political commitment is achieved, both at national and local levels and in the spirit of promoting participatory mechanisms.

Let me also express some views over the nature of the Post-2015 Framework. In this respect, what Italy wants to warn about is the potential threat to the international acceptance of the next Framework for Action that could be represented by the idea of introducing compulsory provisions, with their unavoidable generalizations that could slow down progress on disaster risk reduction and jeopardize the efforts made so far.

One of the key aspects that has facilitated the successful acceptance of the Hyogo Framework for Action has been its extensive flexibility, that gave signatory Countries the possibility to promote internal debate and adapt disaster risk reduction to the peculiarities of their national systems, without feeling forced to comply with standards or mandatory provisions. To this purpose, it is worth mentioning that history is full of examples of praiseworthy initiatives that become unsuccessful simply because the international community was not ready to implement them yet. Therefore, we support the option for a solution that, while promoting innovation and introducing broader and more challenging objectives for disaster risk reduction, maintains the form and nature of the existing Framework for Action.

We will ensure our strongest support to the definition of contents and objectives for the Post-2015 Framework for Action. In this field Italy is fully committed to sharing its know-how and learning from others, ready to cooperate with other Countries and organizations and to support praiseworthy initiatives. For this reason, nowadays the level of cooperation with UN ISDR is very high and will further increase in the future, not as a mutual courtesy nor as the consequence of a deliberate choice. Rather, as the result of common concerns on the importance of furthering the Hyogo Declaration of 2005 with concrete action.

Our common views were also crucial for the successful implementation of a recently accomplished initiative funded by the European Union, the Euromed Programme on Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Natural and Man-made Disasters, a four-year capacity building initiative aimed at strengthening civil protection in the Mediterranean and Balkan Countries through the reinforcement of a civil protection culture based on prevention rather than response, and on inter-institutional dialogue at both national and local levels.

Community resilience against disasters is also a key point that deserves further attention, and the Italian Civil Protection appreciates very much the work performed by UN ISDR towards promoting a wider involvement of cities and communities in disaster risk reduction. We are also convinced

that the local dimension is crucial for making disaster risk reduction effective. The core business of civil protection organizations is more and more focusing on disaster prevention and risk awareness, tasks that cannot be successfully performed if we underestimate the major role that must be played by citizens and local communities.

For this reason, community resilience today stands at the highest rankings of our agenda. In this field, our commitment is to promote deeper knowledge and to improve capabilities at local level, and to ensure that the institutional and legal framework for disaster risk reduction is clear and consistent. It is also extremely important to further progress towards a more effective involvement of the private sector in disaster risk reduction. This has already proved to be a successful approach in relation to the recent earthquake that affected northern Italy in 2012.

For the same reasons, we strongly support UN ISDR activities such as the very successful campaigns “Making Cities Resilient” and “Safe Schools and Hospitals”, two initiatives that we consider valuable for enhancing and supporting local administrations and making citizens aware of the risks affecting their territory.

It is our belief that cities and citizens will play a major role in the future as players of disaster risk reduction. Today, nearly a half of the world’s population is settled in cities. By 2050, this figure is expected to reach 75%. This means that the attention of Governments focus must more and more on promoting responsible urban planning and integration of local level disaster risk reduction into national and international sustainable development and climate change adaptation policies.

Citizens will be requested to take action as well. Even in the recent past, prevention has not paid enough in electoral terms because claims about safety from disasters coming from citizens were not strong enough. Accordingly, for a long time the political community has focused more on assisting the affected populations than on preventing disasters. This has caused immense pain and sorrow in the whole world, but in many Countries this situation has significantly changed in recent years. As long as the number and severity of disasters occurring worldwide are increasing - with significant effects in terms of lost lives and material damage - people are becoming aware of the effects of disasters on their lives, and more demanding towards their representatives. Today there is more political momentum on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, therefore it is time to further boost civil engagement and promote political debate.

In closing my speech, I want to remark that ensuring their active participation in the process that will lead to the adoption of a new agenda for disaster risk reduction is a crucial opportunity that Governments cannot miss. In this respect, my strong hope is that the outcome of this fourth session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction will be a stronger political commitment.

The protection of cities and communities is not only a duty: it is also an opportunity for reducing the social and economic losses related to disasters, and to progress towards building more resilient and equal societies. Today, we are all called to give our contribution to these goals, for ensuring a stable basis for development and making the world, and cities in particular, a safer place.