**Official Plenary Statement - Australia**

**Fourth Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction – Geneva 2013**

**11.00-11.30, Wednesday 22 May**

Excellencies, Heads of Delegations, distinguished guests and participants;

Australia is pleased to be a part of the Global Platform. It is an appropriate time for the international community to share ideas, especially with a new international agreement for disaster risk reduction beginning to take shape.

Over the past decade disasters are reported to have claimed over a million lives, affected more than 2.5 billion people and caused economic loss totalling over $1 trillion worldwide.

Yet the 2013 Global Assessment Report tells us what we have long suspected, that the full scale of disaster losses is actually much worse.

The losses of smaller-scale disasters – those which haven’t made headlines – can have far greater impacts on vulnerable communities, and could increase disaster loss statistics by at least 50 per cent.

We face a significant challenge in reducing disaster losses. More people and assets than ever are exposed to disaster risk. And many factors are driving these increases in disaster risk: urban development, population growth and ever more independent economic systems and supply chains.

Australia has first-hand experience of increasing disaster risk and rising economic cost. And in response, in 2011 – as Australian communities were recovering from a devastating summer of floods, bushfires and cyclones – all levels of Australian government endorsed the ***National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*.**

The Strategy emphasises the importance of a holistic approach to managing natural hazards and climate risks. It outlines that disaster risk reduction is a ***shared responsibility*** of governments, business, communities and individuals – in short, that disaster risk reduction is everybody’s business.

We are working to improve ***risk-informed decision-making***, which we believe is at the heart of disaster risk reduction. We have established national standards for risk assessments, and we are now undertaking risk assessments across all Australian states.

We are applying this greater understanding of risk to inform our longer-term policy and planning decisions. For example, Australia is working to improve integration of disaster and climate risks in land use planning and building codes, a critical step in building sustained community resilience.

We are also working to ***communicate with, and educate people about, risk*.** We believe this will empower individuals, businesses and communities to exercise choice and assume responsibility for their own risk reduction.

Our domestic experience, together with our geographic location in the Asia-Pacific– the world’s most disaster-prone region – means Australia is well-placed to share our experience through our ***international aid program***.

In working towards this, we place a strong emphasis on ***supporting leadership and building on existing capacities***. We do this by working with and supporting our partner governments, to lead and manage their disaster risks.

The Australia-Indonesia Facility for Disaster Reduction is Australia’s largest single bilateral commitment to disaster risk reduction. This partnership between the governments of Australia and Indonesia reflects Indonesia’s impressive commitment to reducing the impacts of disasters through increased budget, strong partnerships with civil society, donors and multilaterals, and enhanced disaster risk management plans that better protect all Indonesians.

In the Philippines, we are supporting Government partners to build community resilience in Metro Manila, concentrating on reducing flood risk exposure through measures such as relocation, elevated structures and protected amenities.

And in the Pacific, this year AusAID launched the Pacific Risk Resilience Program to help communities and local governments together identify and manage natural disaster and climate change risks, and incorporate risk reduction policies, plans and budgets.

Australia is firmly committed to integrating disaster risk reduction across all our development and humanitarian programs.

We believe that disaster risk reduction is an integral component of sustainable development. It not only saves lives and livelihoods, but is necessary to protect hard-won poverty reduction and development gains, including progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

Good progress has been made under the Hyogo Framework, and strong regional and international partnerships have contributed greatly to this success. There is much, however, that still remains to be done.

Over the next two years, we will accelerate our efforts to implement the ***Hyogo Framework for Action***.

After 2015, Australia hopes to see a framework which better recognises that achieving disaster resilience is not solely the domain of disaster risk management actors.

We want greater emphasis on reducing underlying risk factors. This can only be achieved through extending ownership of disaster risk reduction across sectors – and beyond to businesses, communities and individuals.

Finally, we consider risk-informed decision-making as central to effective disaster risk reduction. We would like to see HFA2 provide guidance on how information from diverse stakeholders can be better integrated and applied to inform policy and investment decisions.

In closing, I would like to express our thanks to Margareta Wahlström and the team at UNISDR for convening this event, and more broadly for their excellent work over the past two years in highlighting the importance of disaster reduction to sustainable development.

**Thank you.**