

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Healthy Ecosystems Reduce Vulnerability to Disaster Risk  **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**  **Statement to the Third Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, Geneva, 8th to 13th May 2011**  Address made by Mr. Edmund Barrow, Head of the IUCN Delegation | For more information, please contact :  Edmund Barrow  Head, Ecosystem Management Programme  Tel: +41 22 999 0273  [Edmund.Barrow@iucn.org](mailto:Edmund.Barrow@iucn.org)  Lorena Aguilar  Global Senior Gender Adviser  Tel. +16155212523  [Lorena.aguilar@iucn.org](mailto:Lorena.aguilar@iucn.org)  Radhika Murti  Ecosystem Management Programme,  IUCN-Headquarters  Tel: +41 22 999 0196  [Radhika.murti@iucn.org](mailto:Radhika.murti@iucn.org)  IUCN World Headquarters  Rue Mauverney 28  1196 Gland  Switzerland  Tel: +41 22 999 0000  Fax: +41 22 999 0002  [www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org)  IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges by supporting scientific research; managing field projects all over the world; and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN, international conventions and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice.  IUCN is the world’s oldest and largest global environmental network. IUCN is a democratic union with more than 1,000 government and NGO member organizations, and some 10,000 volunteer scientists in more than 150 countries. IUCN’s work is supported by 1,100 professional staff in 62 countries and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world.  **For more information about IUCN at the Global Platform:**  Visit IUCN at the Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction Booth at the Market Place  Or check out our websites [www.iucn.org/ecosystems](http://www.iucn.org/ecosystems)  [www.pedrr.net](http://www.pedrr.net)  We also encourage you to join IUCN’s Commission on Ecosystem Management  www.iucn.org/cem |
| Mr/Ms. Chairman, distinguished delegates, the ISDR Global Assessment Report on DRR, launched this week is clear that, if we want to reduce the risk of, and build resilience to disasters and to achieve the goals set by the Hyogo Framework for Action, then we need to manage, and where appropriate, restore ecosystems in a more sustainable way to provide the services that women and men in communities need for their well-being. The Assessment Report highlights ecosystem degradation, leading to losses of critical ecosystem services, as one of the main reasons for the unprecedented increase in global disaster risk.  Environmental degradation reduces the capacity of ecosystems to meet communities’ needs for food and other products, to protect them from hazards by providing services such as flood regulation, slope stabilization, protection from storm surges, and to sequester carbon. Further ecosystem degradation reduces the variety of ecosystem services, forcing people to rely on fewer products. The most vulnerable are often those who are most dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods. Ecosystem restoration and their sustainable management can play a critical role in people’s ability to prevent, cope with, and recover from disasters. Ecosystems provide many livelihood benefits, such as food, firewood, clean water, fibers, and medicines that contribute to the overall resilience of communities to disasters and climate change.  The 2011 Global Platform is focused on “Investing today for a safer tomorrow, and increasing investment for local action” which brings local livelihoods and risk to centre stage. Mr/Ms Chairman, ecosystems can provide cost-effective solutions to mitigating the impacts of hazards, and a means to enhance and improve people’s livelihoods, as an investment for tomorrow, which focuses on the local level.  Women, in particular, are agents of change and not just part of “vulnerable groups” or the victims of disasters. Both gender and disaster risk reduction issues are cross-cutting. Making disaster risk reduction gender sensitive is a precondition for achieving sustainable development. Integrating gender perspectives into disaster risk reduction increases efficiency and effectiveness, enhances implementation and builds resilience of nations and communities to disasters. It is clear that sustainable development, human well-being, human security and gender equity are common goals for disaster risk management, as well as for ecosystem management, economic development, and climate change adaptation.  Improved dialogue and coordination mechanisms between these sectors can achieve greater convergence between ecosystem management and disaster risk management, through:   1. **Recognizing and integrating the contribution of ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction in national and local policy** so that disaster risk reduction is managed and planned for at the highest level of government to better coordinate and enforce sustainable environmental DRR policies and procedures. This can be done by integrating national DRR strategies with adaptation processes and with national environmental and development strategies, as well as encouraging new financial incentives for investments in ecosystem management. 2. **Promoting and integrating DRR as a long term approach** (not 2 to 4 year projects) to land management, and livelihood and food security, which is central to more sustainable robust preventative measures. 3. **Implementing land use planning at a landscape level, that integrates sustainable resource management, risk reduction and resilience enhancement** to promote and enforce integrated resource use planning and zoning; conduct environmental monitoring and assessments; have integrated gender-sensitive risk assessments; implement ecosystem restoration and rehabilitation that matches local needs and priorities; and incorporate environmental safeguards into disaster emergency response plans. 4. **Engaging with stakeholders,** including the private sector, through dialogue and collaboration between environmental, planning, development, and disaster risk management agencies and authorities, and with communities most affected by the decisions, including the differing gender aspects for DRR. 5. **Creating and sharing knowledge** through recognizing the value of local practices, coping strategies and knowledge; and recognizing the special role that women play as agents of change and stewards of natural resources, as well as being most affected by extreme events.   There are good examples of ecosystem based DRR that have incorporated many of the above principles. The Mangroves for the Future initiative, launched by IUCN and partners in the wake of the devastating 2004 Western Indian Ocean tsunami helped restore and preserve mangroves in eight countries across Asia, and is now being extended to East Africa and Oceania. In Shinyanga, Tanzania, over 500,000 Ha of forest were restored in an area once called “the Desert of Tanzania” – benefiting over 2 million people and offering them better protection against drought.  IUCN is working to enhance ecosystem management for DRR at national and local scales around the world, and is committed to supporting national platforms in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action. In collaboration with the ISDR Partnership on Environment and DRR (PEDRR), IUCN has developed guidance on the benefits of, and ways for, integrating environmental concerns into DRR strategies at local and national levels. DRR is increasingly becoming integrated into our climate change adaptation work.  IUCN strongly believes that investing in ecosystems and mainstreaming disaster risk and ecosystem management in development planning and budgetary processes will make a major contribution to the goals of achieving sustainable livelihoods for the poor and substantially reducing disaster losses, but this requires both long term commitment and political will to address DRR in an integrated manner.  Thank you. |