



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

Official Statement
By Mr. Walter Cotte, Under Secretary General of IFRC
Geneva, 14 July 2014

Mr. Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you very much for inviting me to participate in this PrepCom meeting. It is encouraging to see the progress being made in development of the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction (HFA2) and in preparation for the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved, especially the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction for its lead role in this process.

Through our member National Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies participated actively in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, adopted in Kobe in 2005. We have referenced this experience within the discussions on HFA2 and the World Conference, in our contributions to the consultation process and regional DRR platforms.

For HFA2 to be a truly global DRR framework, we believe it must be fully integrated within development and humanitarian frameworks, including the sustainable development goals and the new climate agreement. Only this mutual reinforcement of DRR will create a coherent and harmonised post-2015 paradigm shift in effective risk management and sustainable global development.

Stakeholders have a valuable opportunity to make voluntary commitments at the 2015 World Conference. As many of the important commitments made in Kobe and within global disaster risk reduction platforms have not been fully realised, we call upon the stakeholders to clarify and reaffirm their commitments and then to extend these commitments with HFA2 targets that are both ambitious and realistic. The Chair's Summary of the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction called for: allocating 10% of humanitarian relief funds to DRR, enforcing disaster risk reduction measures in building and land use codes, and including DRR in all school curricula. These commitments remain relevant and must be implemented.

National plans of action play an important role in preventing new risks, reducing the existing risks, and building resilience. These plans must be ambitious and realistic enough to achieve these mutually-supportive goals. In this regard, we call upon governments to engage key partners effectively to ensure their national risk reduction platforms contribute to effective disaster risk management. Furthermore, especially in high-risk areas, governments should establish local platforms to interact directly with disaster-affected community members, with a priority of working with marginalised people.

We welcome the Guiding Principles that highlight the need for the full engagement and empowerment of whole-of-society including local communities. These principles recognize that preventing new risks and reducing existing ones is an international legal duty aimed at protecting persons, their livelihoods and property while respecting their human rights. We also believe, as reflected in our fundamental principle of humanity, that our priority must be to empower the most at-risk, poorest and marginalised people. A holistic approach should reduce the underlying causes of vulnerability while addressing the wide spectrum of natural and human-caused risks.

Inclusive risk governance is imperative for effective disaster risk management. We call on the governments to create the enabling environment for risk reduction and management; to build the institutional environment for risk-informed policies and practices; and to identify and empower a system of risk management that defines the clear roles for stakeholders. Governments are asked to assess multi-hazard risks of both natural and human-induced origin when reviewing existing or establishing new nuclear and industrial plants. The potential impact on the local population, communities and environment around these facilities need to be at the core of this process.

The new Framework must keep a high profile of vulnerability reduction as a way to deal with both known and unknown risks, across emergency, recovery, mitigation, and development contexts. The Framework must advocate for practices that reduce people's vulnerability to shocks and stresses, by promoting community ownership and participation, valuing local and indigenous knowledge, and ensuring equitable access to assets and resources. Disaster risk reduction practices should strengthen individual capacities, drawing upon self-identified and prioritised needs, and invite socially marginalised groups to participate as active agents of change in managing their own daily risks.

Social inclusion and empowerment are essential to tackling vulnerability. Due attention should be given to the social and cultural dimensions of disaster, ensuring that the framework addresses how marginalised communities are more likely to be affected by disasters and to feel the effects more severely. HFA2 must promote gender equality and social and cultural diversity as fundamental goals to be achieved in their own rights and as key elements of disaster resilience. Governments should create an enabling environment for socially marginalised people and grassroots organisations to engage in decision-making processes and disaster risk reduction programme design. The HFA2 monitoring process must include a social vulnerability dimension in the design of a new set of indicators.

We emphasize that public policies on disaster risk reduction without allocated resources – unfunded mandates - would fall short of expectations. Enacted policies, therefore, must be underwritten by financial commitments. HFA2 must call for national disaster risk reduction financing, embedded in broader development planning and expenditures. International financing should give priority to those countries and activities where it is most needed, with DRR financing included in development aid budgets.

Public awareness and public education is imperative to building a culture of resilience. We call on national governments to invest in public awareness and public education for

changing minds and behaviours of current and future generations. Well-informed households and individuals can plan ahead, reduce risks, and develop necessary skills. Women, young people and children are powerful agents of behavioural change and must be included in public education, decision making and planning at all levels with a stronger role in programme development and implementation.

A heightened level of accountability and transparency is critical to the success of a future framework for disaster risk reduction. This will require going beyond the self-reporting HFA Monitor and will involve the investment in data and tracking mechanisms for assessing activities, funding, monitoring outcomes at a country level, and implementing inter-country peer review mechanisms.

Finally, we need stronger DRR laws for safer communities. Laws are a unique, yet under-used tool for governments to help protect people from natural hazards. Disaster risk reduction legislation can help reduce risk if it is well-written and is acted upon. Findings from a new joint report from the IFRC and UNDP underscore the urgent need for governments to establish stronger laws that protect at-risk communities from the threats posed by natural disasters. We ask that HFA2 call on governments to review and improve legislation at both national and community levels and to support the implementation of good laws through community education and awareness.

We welcome the call for the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and inter-governmental organizations to support countries and other stakeholders in the implementation of the HFA2. Our unique strength lies in our knowledge of and responsiveness to local needs, as well as our auxiliary role to national governments. For decades, our 189 Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies have been actively engaged in DRR and resilience building at all levels. We are delivering on our commitment to steadily increasing our reach and investment for DRR. From a limited mapping, in 2013, we spent CHF 122.3 million on DRR activities in 121 countries. Our investment has almost doubled since 2009. The number of people reached has increased from 13.5 million in 2009 to 25.6 million in 2013, an increase of 2.42 million people per year on average. The per-capita DRR investment was around 4.77 Swiss francs in 2013. Recognising the increasing disaster impacts on vulnerable people, we will redouble our efforts to scale up DRR activities and to support National Societies in strengthening community resilience, in close partnership with governments and stakeholders at all levels. Together with our global network of local staff and volunteers, we will actively support countries and all stakeholders in the implementation of the HFA2.

Thank you.