

**U.S. Statement to the Fourth Session of the
Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction
Geneva, Switzerland
May 21, 2013**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Since the last Global Platform, the world has been struck with an unprecedented number of disasters. These include one of the most severe droughts ever recorded in the United States in 2012, followed by the catastrophic Hurricane Sandy that struck one of our most densely populated and urbanized areas. This year, we have already experienced significant destruction resulting from earthquakes in Iran, China, and elsewhere. Today, we are experiencing the tragic impact of yesterday's tornado in Oklahoma. The challenges have never been greater, nor our collective efforts more important, to reducing disaster risk.

These and other events have accounted for some of the most destructive and costly disasters in recent history. For example, Hurricane Sandy was the second-largest Atlantic storm on record. The severity of the weather system and characteristics of the impacted region highlighted several areas for improvement, including the need for more advanced planning to address issues specific to emergencies in densely populated areas. However, scientific and technological advancements in early warning greatly reduced the loss of life, and innovative and collaborative efforts helped mitigate the storm's impacts on critical urban infrastructure.

Unfortunately, the global pattern of extreme weather and devastation has become routine, and governments must be prepared to adjust policies

and practices and consider directing resources to manage risk in order to minimize devastation. To be sure, resources to address these risks are limited as many countries face significant and complex economic challenges that will not be resolved overnight. Consequently, disaster risk reduction (DRR) efforts must be smarter, accessible at the local level, and aimed at achieving practical results.

The international community must remain steadfast in pursuing the markers set out in the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) even as we lay the groundwork for the post-HFA. The United States continues to endorse the framework's goals and apply its principles through our own institutions and internationally. For example, recognizing that preparedness is a shared responsibility, President Obama signed the National Preparedness Policy in March 2011. This policy engages the whole community – government, business, and individuals – in a systematic effort to make the United States safer and more resilient to hazards. The policy embraces many of the HFA's five priorities for action, such as reducing underlying risk and building a culture of resilience through our recently released National Mitigation Framework. U.S. programs support governments, communities, and civil society in reducing the risk of and preparing for natural disasters by safeguarding lives, livelihoods, services and facilities – ultimately increasing resilience to adverse transitory events globally.

The United States supports the HFA as a strong basis for the HFA 2, recognizing that the follow-on framework must reflect increasingly prevalent challenges and trends, such as climate change. The United States

supports the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Special Report on Managing the Risk of Extremes and Disasters (IPCC/SREX) conclusions that disaster risk reduction measures are an effective way to adapt to climate variability and change, and we support closer integration of the two issues.

Additionally, DRR should be integrated into sustainable development and poverty eradication policies, plans, program and budgets at all levels, and should be considered within relevant future frameworks.

We need to strengthen the existing physical infrastructure. In developed countries, aging infrastructures not built to withstand the increasing frequency and/or intensity of the natural hazard events we see today in some regions will exacerbate existing vulnerabilities. In many developing countries, infrastructures supporting clean water, sanitation, decent housing, transportation systems, and electricity are poor, unreliable, or nonexistent. Improving these systems, along with incorporating some degree of accountability in the HFA 2, may increase livability, reduce diseases, and strengthen the resiliency of populations.

Disaster risk reduction is a shared responsibility and calls for the involvement of everyone. HFA 2 processes should therefore encourage active participation of a broad range of civil society actors, including affected communities, the private sector, and academia. The HFA 2 must pay increased attention to integrating the whole community into DRR measures, including individuals – such as persons with disabilities and older persons – who may experience a disproportionate impact during and after a disaster.

While the challenges may seem daunting, the opportunities for collaboration are numerous. The United States remains committed to working with the international community toward the common goal of reducing disaster risk worldwide.

Thank you.