



Opening Remarks

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at

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Distinguished Panelists and Guests,

On behalf of the World Bank Group, I am pleased to join all of you here at this inaugural session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

We have heard the call of the global community for action to reduce disaster losses and to build capacities to adapt to climate change. And as if we needed additional impetus, we have witnessed in the last few days some unusual activities in both the Arabian and Pacific seas with Tropical cyclones, Gonu and Barbara, affecting thousands of people, underscoring the urgency of this call.

But the good news is that developing countries are not sitting still. They are increasingly taking action on disaster mitigation and preparedness.

A number of countries are incorporating disaster mitigation into their development programs. Our Country Assistance Strategies in countries like Malawi and Indonesia have included disaster risk reduction as a key pillar. Projects in Turkey, Colombia, Samoa and Vietnam, to name a few, are focusing on different aspects of disaster mitigation. And innovative financing instruments are being designed such as the Caribbean Catastrophic Risk Insurance Facility, to transfer the financial risks that cannot be reduced through prevention.

When we look at the over 600 disaster-related projects supported by World Bank in the last twenty years, we see a total investment of some \$33 billion. What is striking is that investment in "mitigation" has steadily increased. In the mid-1980's, we were investing about \$ 1 billion per year. Today we are approaching \$ 2 billion per year. Even this is a drop in the bucket of what is needed.

I agree with my colleagues here that we must do more to help governments to formulate and implement risk mitigation and financing strategies. And, we are committed to do more.

The World Bank strongly supports implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action as disaster reduction is a key development challenge in our mission of poverty reduction.

I would like to describe about two major initiatives the Bank has launched, particularly important to our efforts to make disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation a 'normal practice' in all development programs.

Mainstreaming at the country level requires an effective mechanism and long-term commitment to engage upstream when new country socio-economic development plans are initiated.

The World Bank's Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, launched recently in partnership with ISDR and donors, offers this mechanism to us and our partners to systematically target all disaster hotspot countries by 2015.

Our priority under GFDRR is to help these countries undertake disaster risk and climate change impact assessments, to formulate and implement risk mitigation strategies.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the donors who are currently supporting this Facility including the governments of Australia, Canada, Denmark, the European Commission, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

We also have to make sure that we help develop capacities at all levels to respond effectively and to build back better and faster, when disasters do occur. To ensure this, we have a new Operational Policy on Rapid Response to Crises and Emergencies. The aim is to provide faster, flexible and more innovative financing and support to client countries to promptly deal with emergencies, and also embedded in the policy is the objective to reduce the vulnerability to future disasters.

There are four key elements of our work in disaster reduction and recovery:

- **Speed:** With new policies and procedures, we can swiftly mobilize resources to the countries in imminent, recurring and future disasters. For us this means getting resources on the ground quickly.
- **Staffing:** We are enhancing our ability to mobilize the right expertise from anywhere in the Bank.
- **Synergy:** There is no issue which requires effective partnerships more than disaster reduction. Here, we recognize the complementary roles and core competencies of different organizations. We start with the idea of partnership and we strive for synergies when we operate on the ground; and
- **Sustainability:** This is the recognition that prevention-recovery-and reconstruction requires a long term engagement and strategic long term vision to reduce the risk of future disasters.

As the Global Platform gets underway, we need to recognize that to effectively address the issue of disaster risk reduction, it is clear that we all need to work together. All of us who work in development understand the urgency and importance of our collective mission to reduce vulnerabilities.

The challenge in the next two days is to outline just how and where we need to go....how we need to marshal the experience and resources and talent in this room, whether that comes from partner countries, the UN, the private sector, civil society organizations, the media, other international institutions and my own organization the World Bank.

The challenge for us all in the next two years, before we meet again as a Global Platform, is to move ahead decisively with implementation, and with tangible results.

Thank you.