



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Permanent Delegation
to the International Organisations in Geneva

Head of Delegation
Ambassador

ISDR Plenum statement

Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

Tuesday-Thursday, 5th to 7th June 2007

Intervention by Eckart Guth

EC Ambassador

- The European Commission is pleased to attend the first session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. The launching of a platform that allows us to continue to share experiences and lessons learnt in the area of disaster risk reduction is a timely initiative. The EU has signed up to the Hyogo Framework of Action through its Member States. The European Commission is committed to support the efforts of its member states to reduce risks and improve coping capacities. To this end, the Hyogo Framework provides a very useful international policy framework.
- Disaster risk reduction is, and will remain, key to reducing poverty and to obtaining sustainable development. The latest projections of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predict an increase in extreme weather events like floods

and droughts worldwide. It is no secret that developing countries are the least resilient to such events, and need our support in mitigating the risks of natural disasters.

- In order to implement the Hyogo Framework, we have to make sure that disaster risk reduction is adequately integrated into development planning at regional, national and community level. As a number of development issues have to be addressed at the same time disaster risk reduction is often not treated as a priority *even* in countries which regularly suffer from floods, typhoons and earthquakes. The question we *all* need to pose is – how do we create more commitment to mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into our work on a consistent basis?
- The European Commission is committed to support Disaster Risk Reduction as spelled out in the 2005 European Consensus on Development. It sets out the common objectives and principles of EU development cooperation. We have developed guidance and engaged in awareness-raising with the aim of more prominently including disaster risk reduction in the cooperation strategies with our partner countries. The European Commission is currently supporting disaster risk reduction efforts in countries, like India, Nepal, Bolivia, Tajikistan, Cambodia, the Horn of Africa and in the Caribbean. Since 1998 the EC has committed increasing budgets to disaster preparedness activities through the DIPECHO programme. In 2006 the Commission launched the ACP-EC Natural Disaster

Facility which will concentrate on regional capacity-building for disaster risk reduction in Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific. We hope that similar mechanisms can be established for high-risk countries in other parts of the world.

- Whilst this is a good start, more needs to be done – together with partner governments – to shift from isolated activities to a more comprehensive approach. We will work on an EU policy document outlining this comprehensive approach towards the integration of disaster risk reduction into development, and humanitarian assistance. This objective must be matched by adequate resources, better capacity-building, more research and assessments. It also requires practical guidance and tools, as well as continuous engagement with partner governments and other stakeholders.
- It is crucial *also* that we work together in addressing disaster risk reduction. The EC is a member of the Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction Steering Committee and is committed to closely coordinating its activities with the Facility in third countries. In cooperation with the UN and the World Bank, the EC leads in developing common disaster damage, needs and capacity assessment methodologies drawing upon the resources of its scientific DGs (Science and Research, Joint Research Centre, etc.) and a rapid funding facility under the new Instrument for Stability. This will allow faster and more targeted contributions to recovery and rehabilitation.

- In our humanitarian aid, we try to mainstream Disaster Risk Reduction whenever this is relevant. The EC is also actively contributing to reinforce global damage assessment tools that will allow faster and more targeted contributions to recovery and rehabilitation.
- In terms of response, the EC has undertaken to reinforce the coordination of EU member states in civil protection assistance interventions in the event of major emergencies in and outside the EU. It has recently adopted a civil protection financial instrument for the protection of people, the environment and property in the event of natural disasters. This instrument is open also to the participation of third countries. Furthermore, the EC plans to reinforce existing early warning and pre-alert systems mechanisms to enable rapid disaster response.
- We look forward to sharing information on our policies and tools, experiences and lessons learnt at this, and future editions, of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.