



**STATEMENT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME
ON CRISIS RESPONSE AND RECONSTRUCTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL
LABOUR ORGANIZATION (ILO)
AT THE FIRST SESSION OF THE GLOBAL PLATFORM
FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

Geneva, 5-6 June 2007

Mr. Chairperson, Excellencies, distinguished delegates:

I am honoured to address this assembly on behalf of the International Labour Organization. The ILO fully endorses this renewed worldwide alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction.

ILO's commitment to Disaster risk reduction

The ILO's entry point to disaster risk reduction is to decrease the socio-economic vulnerabilities of disaster-prone areas, supporting concerned communities to become self-reliant. In disaster risk management, our concern is to safeguard livelihoods, and thus better protect the lives and the assets of affected communities. In disaster response, our role is to ensure that these communities can restart or continue to sustain their livelihoods, thus reducing dependency from humanitarian assistance and paving the way for a safe development path.

Poverty at the root of vulnerability

Poverty lies at the root of disaster risk vulnerability. To make things worse, if you are poor, you are unprotected, and this narrows the scope for recovery even more. Protection, recovery and promotion of sustainable livelihoods, with appropriate conditions for employment creation and income generation, are therefore a critical pillar of our commitment to reduce socio-economic vulnerabilities. It makes the promotion of "Decent Work" pivotal to our present common endeavour. Ultimately, it is access to decent work that will make men and women less vulnerable and better able to establish their own coping mechanisms when disaster strikes.

Employment is central in post-disaster recovery

Employment is key, for immediate recovery as well as for development. This also means that job protection and job creation are integral to each of the various stages of prevention, preparedness, recovery and reconstruction.

The extended destruction of infrastructures and services facilities, crops, irrigation schemes and fishery facilities, productive assets and small and micro businesses, are amongst the usual impact of a disaster on the livelihoods in the most affected



areas. This is particularly evident within poor and marginalized households, which can count only on limited livelihood alternatives, low saving capacity and poor quality housing.

The importance of joint pre-disaster planning

The ILO is committed to this global effort to strengthen prevention, mitigation, early warning, preparedness and recovery, joining hands with with local communities, civil society, local and national governments, and international agencies worldwide. We are happy to announce that during the ongoing 95th session of the International Labour Conference, one of the main issues under discussion is the promotion of decent work for sustainable development, including the promotion of “green jobs”; this also means expanding the dialogue agenda amongst government and employers’ and workers’ organizations to also include the environment and the world of work.

This debate is also prompting more the ILO towards a major research agenda on the consequences of different scenarios for climate change, disaster risk reduction and mitigation measures on production and consumption patterns, poverty alleviation and future employment and income opportunities; and, among other, implementing programs of support for the creation of new “green” employment within a series of priority sectors, such as renewable energy sources, energy conservation, new low carbon technologies, public transport, etc.

A Common challenge

The ILO’s contribution to disaster risk reduction has to be founded on strong partnerships with other members of the international community. This is why the approach of looking for areas of policy synergy has far-reaching implications for the work of the ILO and its relations with other agencies. One practical demonstration of this strategy is the work that ILO has initiated with the FAO for establishing common guidelines for assessing the impact of sudden-onset disasters on the livelihoods of the affected people and planning for an immediate response. This work has been conceived within the framework of the Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery and the Post-Disaster Need Assessment (PDNA) methodology coordinated by the UNDP.

The ILO has also put in motion with UNDP and FAO the Pre-Disaster Recovery Planning initiative. The objective is exactly to support and consolidate government’s effort to promote a quicker and better recovery in case of disaster.

Last but not least, is the emphasis given to the strengthening of local capacities; it is at local level where human, economic and social losses are suffered most. The International Training Centre of the ILO is working with ISDR and the International Recovery Platform in training and capacity building of local governments and local socio-economic actors, to assist them in integrating disaster risk reduction policies in local agendas and the local strategic planning.



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Dear Chairperson, dear delegates, dear colleagues, within seconds, a natural disaster can destroy lives, seriously damage local and national economies, many jobs can be lost, all the development work of generations can vanish.

Therefore, we ratify our strong commitment to do everything possible to work jointly with all the main stakeholders of this Global Platform: disaster risk reduction is a key issue to preserve jobs and to ensure proper working and living conditions.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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