

**Statement delivered by Mr. Roberto Acosta
on behalf of the Executive Secretary,
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change welcomes the opportunity to address the First Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The two components of responses to the climate change phenomenon - namely mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions, and adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change - are complementary approaches of addressing the long- and short-term areas of action to combat global warming and its impacts. In addition they are indeed necessary to current and future efforts to reduce disaster risks.

The long-term goal of reducing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere to safe levels is the overarching area of action to manage the risks arising from climate change. The first steps towards this end have been taken through the adoption of the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol.

The next phase of action will come in the form of a future regime to guide our mitigation action beyond the year 2012. But aside from commitments agreed through the official intergovernmental process there is much that can be and is already being done by national governments, cities, firms and individuals.

In this regard, we greatly appreciate efforts made by the organizers to minimize the carbon footprint of this conference. It is through the cumulation of these types of initiatives that a concerted effort can be built to guide the world towards a greenhouse-gas constrained future.

The other side of the climate change challenge - that of adaptation - is one which is very close to the objectives and operation of the disaster risk reduction community. Indeed, the Hyogo Framework mentions adaptation to climate change in several instances. There are many lessons and experiences to be exchanged in this regard between the climate change community and the disaster risk reduction community.

Theory and practice have shown that disaster risk reduction and management goes hand in hand with adaptive responses to climate change. In fact, the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report confirmed that Adaptation measures are seldom undertaken in response to climate change alone but can be integrated within other national objectives, including those relating to disaster planning.

The different themes under consideration at this conference are very relevant to the themes under consideration for adaptation to climate change. The Global Platform agenda covers issues of mainstreaming into national development, education, health, preparedness and ecosystem management in the context of disaster risk reduction. All of these are parts of ongoing discussions in the context of adaptation action within the climate change negotiating process.

Similarly, within the climate change process disaster risk reduction appears saliently under a number of action areas within the adaptation discourse. Under the recently-initiated Nairobi Work Programme on Impacts, Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change, the themes of “climate-related risks and extreme events” and “adaptation planning and practices” involve a number of actions that incorporate issues of disaster risk reduction and aims to benefit from the experience of the disaster risk reduction community in assessing and managing such risk.

We are very happy that ISDR and others involved in disaster risk reduction are among the large number of organizations, including UNDP, UNEP, FAO and the research community, that have partnered with the

UNFCCC secretariat in implementing the Nairobi Work Programme and other relevant adaptation activities under the UNFCCC. These organizations, whether international, intergovernmental or nongovernmental, are also in the process of planning or implementing their own activities relating to adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change at all levels.

In response to the urgent adaptation needs of the most vulnerable, the climate change process has spawned for least developed countries what is known as the NAPA process, which stands for National Adaptation Programmes of Action. This is a country-driven process that results in a prioritized list of projects that need to be implemented in order to fend off the possibility of the LDCs becoming even more vulnerable with the onset of climate change.

Many of the projects identified in the LDC NAPAs also double as projects that contribute to disaster risk reduction at the same time. It is this type of synergy that strengthens the case for collaboration between the climate change community and the disaster risk reduction community. The least developed countries are counting on relevant organizations to support the implementation of those projects identified in the completed NAPAs, which relate to disaster risk reduction. For example, Bhutan is seeking to reduce climate change induced risks and vulnerabilities from glacial lake outburst floods in its first NAPA project.

Where extreme weather events will become more intense and/or more frequent as a consequence of climate change, the economic and social costs of those events will increase, and these increases will be substantial in the areas most directly affected. Climate change impacts spread from directly impacted areas by climatic disasters and sectors such as water resources or agriculture to other areas and sectors such as tourism through extensive and complex linkages.

Although there are many adaptation solutions that are not part of the disaster risk reduction context, for example those relating to gradual changes in ecosystems, agriculture, water resources, health and sea level rise, we strongly believe that disaster risk reduction is a key strategy in addressing the adverse impacts of climate variability and change, in achieving sustainable development goals and in saving human lives.

The IPCC has underlined that one way of increasing adaptive capacity is by introducing consideration of climate variability and change impacts in development planning, for example, by including measures to reduce vulnerability in existing disaster risk reduction strategies.

The Hyogo Framework for Action identifies a number of priorities for action, including reducing underlying causes of disaster risk factors; it identifies adaptation to climate change as one way towards that end. It calls for promoting the integration of disaster risk reduction with adaptation to climate variability and climate change.

The importance of adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change has been steadily increased in the context of the UNFCCC. Many Parties to the Convention have expressed their view that adaptation should be one of the building blocks in any future international cooperation agreement to address climate change. Our next Conference of the Parties in Bali in December will be of great importance to strengthen adaptation activities, including those related to disaster risk reduction.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In concluding, I would like to offer our best wishes for fruitful discussions during the coming days. I am convinced that the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, the UNFCCC and other international organizations that deal with these important matters will work in close collaboration to address the needs of all countries, in particular the most vulnerable.

Thank you

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