

# **BUILDING A LOCAL GOVERNMENT ALLIANCE FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION “THE INCHEON DECLARATION”**

## **Summary from 11-13 August 2009 Conference, Incheon (after comments and approval in plenary)**

Opened by the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, and  
Sang-Soo, the Mayor of Incheon Metropolitan City  
Co-chaired by Helena Molin Valdés, UNISDR, and  
Peter Woods, Secretary General United Cities for Local Governments- Asia and  
Pacific

The Conference participants have come to an agreement to actively move the disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation agenda forward through an Alliance of Local Governments for Disaster Risk Reduction, with 200 participants from national to local government levels, local authorities, associations and networks, professional and technical organizations, academia, the private sector and civil society, and the UN present.

Conference participants thank Incheon Metropolitan City and United Nations secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) for hosting this meeting and for their leadership in building this Alliance.

The group of Ministers and Members of Parliament participating in the Conference met in support of this cause, and committed to continue championing the subject for the benefit of humankind, to work together across political boundaries and to make sure that the recommendations and learning reach the population at risk.

We agreed to target ‘**local governments**’ and use this as the encompassing term for urban and rural communities of different size and level (regional, provincial, metropolitan, cities, municipalities, townships and villages), in the global awareness campaign lead by ISDR and partners and in the Alliance. We also agreed to focus especially on reaching the poor and high risk communities with our efforts to reduce risk and build resilient communities, and to engage with grass-roots organizations and people, to motivate and involve them directly. The campaign will primarily target mayors, other local leaders and technical staff involved in urban development, as well as national authorities responsible for local development and/or disaster risk reduction.

## **The challenges we have identified:**

In the Plenary Sessions, the four Thematic Sessions and in particular, the discussions, the following key challenges and issues have been identified:

➤ **Political opportunity**

In his opening remarks, the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, asked how local governments could actively contribute to address climate change and reduce the increasing risk of disasters. He called for the need of world leaders in this area to include mayors, townships and community leaders to address climate change and disaster risk reduction. This commitment presents an opportunity to scale-up the political empowerment and voice of local governments on the international scene, which is often still weak or even absent.

➤ **Urban risk on the increase**

More than 50% of the global population now lives in urban areas with an increasing population exposed to failing infrastructure, sanitation deficiencies, and lack of basic services, among many other risk factors. The 2009 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction lists unplanned urbanization and poor urban governance as two main underlying factors accelerating disaster risk. Other important risk drivers are vulnerable rural livelihoods and ecosystem decline. Risk is increasing in urban agglomerations of different size due to unplanned urbanization and accelerated migration from rural areas or smaller cities. The low institutional capacity of local authorities to provide land and services to the poor leads to urban growth of informal settlements in hazard prone areas (900 millions in informal settlements- increasing by 25 million per year). Urban hazards (e.g. flooding) are exacerbated by the lack of investment in infrastructure as well as of poor environmental management. With respect to flooding, the lack of appropriate storm drainage systems is a major cause for urban floods.

➤ **Disaster risk reduction in rural communities**

The risks are not only to be found in urban areas. The challenge faced by rural impoverished communities and their local governments in small villages and townships, especially those with large day-to-day dependency on crops, livestock and natural resources, during and after disasters are multi-dimensional. While local communities have developed indigenous knowledge for disaster risk reduction to minimize risk, the adoption of new technologies, tools and sharing of good practices by local governments can go a long way to reduce risk in those communities and enhance adaptation to climate change.

➤ **The exploration of alternatives to ever-increasing metropolises and increased urban risk**

Faced with the unsustainable migration of rural population to urban areas - usually of the poorest ones and often triggered by localized disasters - totally lacking in efficient and sustainable infrastructure, there is a need to encourage regional economic development in rural areas and smaller cities. This would provide opportunities for planned urban areas of sustainable proportions that would obviate the need for mass migration to achieve family economic opportunities. Governments should not just

recognize that huge numbers of people are moving to unsustainable cities but may need to actively intervene with effective planning and economic investment to provide an alternative.

➤ **Advocacy for local level disaster risk reduction and the empowerment of local governments**

We need to more actively mobilize political support for the engagement of a wider group of stakeholders, not only the local governments, but national governments, civil society and the private sector. We recognize that local governments can actively contribute to solving global issues.

➤ **Local governance for risk reduction**

It is the local government that is the first responder, and the one responsible for community development and sustainable disaster risk reduction. The empowerment of local governments must be a key priority in order to encourage democratic decision-making that involves the citizens and all key stakeholders at the local level. The proper confirmative authority of the local government, human capacity and allocation of appropriate resources needs to be ensured.

Risk reduction at the local level depends on good local governance, particularly in the political decision-making and formulation of policy and enforcement relating to land use planning, regulatory controls, zoning, and construction standards. Risk reduction calls for flexibility in the decision making process and the empowerment of communities, which in turn pushes transparency and good governance.

The value and usefulness of an Alliance of Local Governments for Disaster Risk Reduction can assist in the facilitation of good governance and create the space for stakeholders to work together.

Every disaster brings to bear questioning of accountability of local and regional authorities, and whether they are over-ruled by national authorities.

Each local or provincial government should have an explicit policy and action plan for disaster risk reduction, and dedicated personnel and budget assigned.

➤ **Move from a 'disaster response' mode to a 'risk reduction' mode**

The age old challenge that still exists with many local governments, is to change the mind set from disaster response to disaster reduction and preparedness. "Mind set" means the understanding, the awareness and current way of understanding and doing things. The challenge is to bring the issues of disaster risk to a new level of significance for local governments. We need to clearly describe what the local authorities need to achieve: to localize the Hyogo Framework for Action.

➤ **Disaster risk reduction is an investment - not a cost**

We face an ongoing challenge to justify the need for resources to invest in reducing risk and how to effectively utilize national resources by whichever sphere of government is in the best position to utilize such resources.

A World Bank led mile-stone study on the Economics of Disasters will be launched mid-November 2009. It will include important evidence to build the case for savings and benefits - and the costs of not addressing disaster risk.

The methodology may well be used for the local government to provide its own analysis of costs and benefits to negotiate with national governments.

It is important to reflect on how information and data is gathered for global reports like this. Does it represent the reality on the ground? We recommend as a principle that participatory approaches are used for data gathering for all studies to truly reflect the realities, and to build ownership at the local level.

➤ **Planning for disaster risk reduction**

The need for a more widespread development of municipal risk assessments and maps as well as of local vulnerability and capacity assessments exists. These studies should serve as the basis for local and urban development plans and programmes and the development of municipal disaster risk management plans. Many good lessons are available, these need to be shared. We call for such practices to be shared by different means and ways such as web resources to be broadly available.

➤ **Partnerships**

The key partners in any effective democratic decision-making are the citizens - the people-, the interest groups and the organizations and structures that can assist in this process, often including specific cultural organizations and their leaders, e.g. religious, grass-root organizations, NGOs and traditional leaders.

The challenge is to find ways to work with local businesses and companies, to ensure there is an opportunity to involve the private sector when policy is being developed by local governments, in projects aimed at reducing risks, and creating strong sustainable public private partnerships in the framework of Corporate Social Responsibility. In doing so, decisions relating to these must be made transparently and with sound technical and sustainable understanding of the consequences of such decisions, to not create new risks. For example, telecommunications services provision could be an opportunity to develop partnerships with emergency response and disaster reduction and preparedness. To be effective, they must be developed ahead of time<sup>1</sup>.

➤ **Climate change adaptation, mitigation and disaster risk reduction**

Given the 'front-line' status of local governments, there is an urgent need to inform communities and local governments about local level climate change implications and practical guidance for adaptation, as well as of

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<sup>1</sup> The World Economic Forum developed guidelines and principles for private sector involvement in humanitarian situations, which should be abided to.

climate change mitigation opportunities. Local climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts can be the most powerful method of minimizing potential disaster losses due to local climate variability and extreme events that have immediate implications.

What is the capacity of local government to deal with this responsibly? Local governments are considered as one of the pillars in the proposal for a new agreement within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. To fulfill this role, they need strong collaborations and partnerships to enhance the linkage with national policies and initiatives. Local governments and actors can provide basic data, currently unavailable, and feedback from a local perspective on how disaster risk reduction, adaptation and climate change mitigation actions are being integrated in the local sustainable development processes. We see as an opportunity the outcomes of the 4th Asia Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction to be held in Incheon, Republic of Korea in 2010, will carry the theme of "Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction".

Local governments can provide the necessary political leadership assist to reverse climate change and reduce climate risk. A collective of local government organizations and individuals can achieve this together, in the Campaign and Alliance. We need to create nationally political space, and to use ISDR as an advocacy vehicle. Role models and good examples should be collected and disseminated in the Campaign and by the Alliance.

➤ **Tools for disaster risk reduction**

A vast number of tools, guidelines, templates and other useful resources already exists and only needs to be adapted or updated for specific use by local government authorities and local communities. The challenge is to locate, collect and create access points for a range of tools and resources for disaster risk reduction. Research, monitoring and evaluation should be considered in all project and programme development.

➤ **Capacity development for local authorities**

This is certainly one of the most pressing issues, as capacity development can have a significant impact on minimizing losses from disaster events, climate change and variability and on strengthening decentralization of resources. There are many existing international, regional, national and local centers, training institutions and academia to build on. Capacity development is recognized as a vital ingredient for decentralized disaster risk reduction and sustainable local development and for empowering local government units and communities. As such, capacity development is a necessary component in building the Local Government Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction in carrying out the World Campaign.

➤ **Improved information and communications technology (ICT) is a necessity**

Capacities of stakeholders to use ICT for disaster risk reduction need to be strengthened. ICT can empower people, communities and

organizations to become more self-sufficient in dealing with and managing disaster situations and their aftermath. The use of ICT can increase the efficiency of managing the disaster reduction processes and, as a result, enhance the delivery of services to people at local and community levels and beyond. ICTs facilitate and enhance coordination, collaboration at all stages of the process dealing with disaster risk reduction, such as planning, early warning and increased communication among stakeholders.

Where appropriate, access to resources should be designated to increase ICT capacities at the local level, to build on existing conditions, and opportunities to partner with private sector operators should be explored.

## Way forward

Arising from this meeting, the following concrete objectives have been identified as priorities to take into account for the ISDR system 2010-2011 World Disaster Reduction Campaign for local governments on urban risk reduction and the supporting Alliance of Local Governments:

- **Communicating clearly for disaster risk reduction**  
We collectively agree to recognize and to actively promote the use of straightforward, common sense language in all aspects of disaster risk reduction. Effective communications is critical to delivering a clear and readily understandable set of messages about the use, value and importance of disaster risk reduction to communities and local governments in all areas.
- **Political engagement**  
The Alliance, as part of the World Campaign, will establish a compact between national and local governments, particularly those who can demonstrate strong partnering and interaction towards the common goals of disaster risk reduction including the utilization of resources.
- **Champions**  
We will seek to identify at least 25 “Champions” from local governments, and from national governments for local and urban development, with demonstrated leadership in this area (see criteria). These Champions will be invited to commit time to help raising awareness and advocating local governments needs at the highest levels and promote broad partnerships, through a bottom-up approach. A target for the Campaign will be to improve the commitment of the UN to work with local government in risk reduction and climate change adaptation and mitigation programmes.
- **Promoting capacity development for local governments at all levels**  
We shall, as an Alliance, develop a long-term mission and work plan, towards 2015 and beyond, to actively promote capacity development and

training programmes at the international, regional, national and local level, with the aim of enhancing human resource development, necessary to empower the role of local governments and actors in disaster risk reduction.

As part of the immediate ISDR campaign strategy the following capacity development actions should be considered, to be carried out by existing training facilities, champions and partners in each region:

- Inventory of resources and opportunities available worldwide at all levels;
- Support to localize and indigenize of training programmes to reach communities and local governments in all areas;
- A plan to initiate a “Training of Trainers” programme, utilizing the new Incheon ISDR Training facility and existing institutes and organizations with already developed training and capacity development, to develop disaster risk management awareness and capacity, targeting local governments and legislators. It will build on specific partnerships and available resources in each region;
- Partnerships for curricula development (technical, policy and legislative contents) through and with the support of UNISDR Regional Offices;
- Support of disaster risk reduction mainstreaming within the already existing capacity development programmes;
- Besides training, promotion of capacity development through experience sharing, south-south exchange and knowledge transfer; networking and partnership building; and joint project development and implementation.

The Alliance will promote decentralization and mobilization of resources especially from national to local levels to facilitate equal access to existing opportunities as well as the development of local opportunities responding to specific local needs.

➤ **Localizing the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), and mid-term review:**

After the first five years of implementing the Hyogo Framework, much has been learned and achieved, however, it has been affirmed that the process needs to reach out further to local governments and local communities. The mid-term Review 2009-2010 will offer a number of opportunities and challenges for local governments and particularly local-level high risk communities. These ‘front-line’ organizations will be called upon to help to upscale the implementation of the HFA and to lead and mobilize communities to adopt and use this disaster risk reduction tool.

Local Governments and Alliance networks around the world will be called upon to spread the message of the HFA, to collect success stories and to share country-specific experiences. Achieving the goals and objectives of the HFA by 2015 will not be possible without the support and collaboration of local government authorities.

The HFA midterm review is also a significant opportunity to contribute to the new urban risk reduction initiative and World Campaign 2010-2011, which will also stimulate local action for the implementation of the HFA. This shall be accompanied by a comprehensive advocacy campaign to build awareness of both the HFA and disaster risk reduction.

➤ **Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and mitigation– what does this mean for local governments?**

This is a pressing issue for everyone. Local governments must become the drivers of adaptation and mitigation strategies that will result in greatly reduced disaster risk and loss potential. The campaign will focus on sharing practical measures on effective climate change adaptation and the links to disaster risk reduction.

➤ **Select showcase local governments as role models for resilient cities**

We propose to start with a minimum of 25 cases as role models and commit to communicate examples to UNISDR. This is proposed as the starting point. We will aim at having thousands of local governments involved by the end of the campaign, with increasing numbers towards 2015 and beyond.

What does this mean for each of those local governments? Initiatives to recognize good achievements and examples of successful local risk reduction examples have to be set up - UNISDR will develop a matrix and share it with the Alliance for nominations and follow-up.

➤ **UNISDR will coordinate the global campaign strategy, and especially focus on:**

- (a) Facilitating the political space between local governments, national governments and the UN for disaster risk reduction,
- (b) Providing for a coordinated public awareness and media campaign, which will build on local, national and international partners outreach capacities (engage with professional marketing and media experts), and
- (c) During the campaign, committing to facilitate the compilation of existing tools and good practices<sup>2</sup>, and promoting capacity development, learning and sharing of experience between champion local governments and with the partners in each region.

**Commitment:**

The Alliance of participants at this Conference will serve as primary consultative group for the global campaign. Specific responsibilities of institutions and networks will be set out in the campaign strategy, based on

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<sup>2</sup> We have 40 examples of local government in disaster risk reduction good practices already; 15 will be published in 2009.



their specific commitment to take responsibility for aspects of the campaign. UNISDR will call upon the participants in this meeting as the advisors to the campaign and launch a call for “champions” and role model cities and other local governments with good practices- to demonstrate the attributes of a disaster resilient city and local government.

The concentrated global awareness campaign on urban risk reduction (see possible slogans proposed in annex) takes place during 2010-2011 and will build on previous ISDR campaigns for safer schools and safer hospitals. After this, the campaign will continue with the Alliance, national and local government organizations and partners to promote disaster resilient local governments at all levels with targets for 2015, and beyond.

### **Criteria for selection of Champions:**

- 1.- High profile leader with possibility to mobilize others and influence policy or action (national, local, community)
- 2.- Belong to a local government (city, municipality, township, village) with some good practice to share in disaster risk reduction, or under development (see the 10 Basic Attributes of a Disaster Resilient City and Local Government).
- 3.- Be willing to set aside time to participate in international, regional and/or national dialogues and events
- 4.- Be able to convey messages to reach the people: compose songs, slogans and/or articles

## **Events in the pipeline (to be further developed)**

### **2009**

7-11 September 2009: Congress of CITYNET, Yokohama

14 Oct 2009: International Day for Disaster Reduction: Safer Hospitals

19-21 October 2009. UCLG-AP Executive Bureau and Training Session, Changwon, Korea

15 November 2009: Launch of the Study on Economics of Disasters, Washington D.C., USA

9-14 November 2009: UCLG World Council, Guangzhou

### **2010**

17 January 2010: 15<sup>th</sup> Year Commemoration of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, Kobe-Hyogo and other DRR events  
(Launch the Campaign)

April 2010: World Health Day WHO: Healthy Cities

28-30 May 2010: ICLEI World Congress of Cities on Climate Change, Bonn

May- October 2010: World Expo: Better Cities, Better Life, Shanghai, China

May-June 2010: Launch of IFRC World Disasters Report

September 2010: UCLG World Congress, Mexico

13 October 2010: International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction

19-22 October 2010: UCLG Asia Pacific Congress, Hamamatsu, Japan

25-28 October 2010: 4<sup>th</sup> AMCDRR, Incheon, Republic of Korea

### **2011**

May: Launch of Second Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction

June: Third Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

12 October 2011: International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction

[www.unisdr.org](http://www.unisdr.org)

[www.preventionweb.net](http://www.preventionweb.net)