

**Second session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction**

**16-19 June 2009, Geneva**

**EU Statement on Disaster Risk Reduction**

**Intervention by the CZ Presidency on behalf of the EU**

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Czech Republic is currently holding the Presidency of the European Union and it is in this capacity, and on behalf of its 27 Member States and the European Commission, that I am now addressing the second session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The EU has signed up to the Hyogo Framework for Action and is committed to its implementation, including through supporting developing countries to this end. Disasters are increasing and know no boundaries. Coping with disaster risk reduction is a necessity in the developing countries as well as within Europe. In the EU, in the two decades 1978 to 2007, 821 reported disasters have caused more than 86.000 losses of lives and 160 billion Euros of damages. The EU is currently developing a strategy on the prevention of disaster inside the EU. We support initiatives in our Member States, including through national disaster risk reduction platforms, with a view to coordinate efforts aimed at diminishing disaster risk and improving preparedness. In this context, we welcome recent efforts to improve regional cooperation among Member States and with the UN International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (ISDR).

Building on its own experience, the EU has recently (18-19 May) endorsed a proposal from the European Commission for an EU Strategy for supporting disaster risk reduction in developing countries, which had been put forward as part of a wider Community approach on the prevention of natural and man-made disasters.

In essence, the Strategy promotes a shift from support for isolated disaster risk reduction activities to a more comprehensive approach in which disaster risk reduction will be addressed as an integral part of EU development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. Indeed, this Strategy identifies objectives, priority areas for intervention and ways for the EU Member States and the European Commission to work better together. This should also lead to more effective cooperation between humanitarian and development actors within and outside the EU.

I would like to underline in particular four points in relation to the Strategy:

Firstly, *the Strategy's overall objective is to help save lives and reduce human suffering, as well as to contribute to sustainable development and poverty eradication.* We know that disasters shatter the lives of poor people all over the globe, since they are usually those most vulnerable and least able to cope. We know that effective disaster risk reduction can save lives and protect livelihoods. We know that investing in risk prevention, mitigation and preparedness before a disaster takes place pays significant dividends compared to paying for relief, recovery and reconstruction afterwards.

We know all that, but so far, we have not acted fully upon this knowledge. We need to do better. The EU Strategy for supporting disaster risk reduction in developing countries will facilitate the integration of disaster risk reduction into the EU's development policies, recognising it as a key element in reducing poverty across the globe and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The Strategy covers all developing countries and Overseas Countries and Territories, but particular attention will be given to disaster-prone regions, the least developed and most vulnerable countries, as well as the groups of people and areas most at-risk.

Secondly, *the EU can not afford duplicating efforts and misusing resources.* This may sound evident but it is not always lived by in practise. We may be the largest donor, but that does not give us the right to be complacent. On the contrary, we have an increased responsibility to optimise our efforts and ensure that we work more closely and more efficiently together.

The EU Strategy for disaster risk reduction provides an opportunity for the EU Member States and the Commission to act together while respecting aid effectiveness principles. It provides also an opportunity to work in partnership with others. The Strategy is to be implemented in coordination and coherence with other major EU policy areas and instruments, such as the Community Civil Protection Mechanism.

We have identified four implementation priority areas to allow for a prompt and focussed start: (i) Dialogue on disaster risk reduction; (ii) Regional Action Plans for disaster risk reduction; (iii) Integration of disaster risk reduction into EU's external action, including in the framework of the UN and partners' development strategies; and (iv) coordination of EU support for key disaster risk reduction investment.

To make things more concrete and operational, we intend to finalise an implementation plan by the end of this month. Just as we did with the Strategy, we want to have a broad consultation process on the draft implementation plan. As a matter of fact, we have foreseen wide-ranging stakeholder consultations during this Global Platform organized by the ISRD, using this opportunity to take advantage of your experience and the various perspectives that you represent.

Thirdly, *disaster risk reduction efforts need to be linked with those for tackling climate change and its negative impacts*. As you all know, disasters caused by natural hazards are on the increase. Climate related disasters constitute more than 80 per cent of natural disasters worldwide and the ability to cope with their consequences is a key element in reducing poverty. Therefore, disaster risk reduction plays an essential role in adaptation to climate change. Through the Strategy we will pool our collective strengths to advance this agenda.

Fourthly and finally, *the ambitions of an EU Strategy for supporting disaster risk reduction in developing countries must be matched by adequate resource mobilization*. Several EU Member States and the Commission are currently both strengthening efforts for the integration and mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into development cooperation and scaling-up, when possible and justified, specific funding for disaster risk reduction within existing financial frameworks. For example, the Commission has recently agreed with its African, Caribbean and Pacific partners to allocate €180 million to disaster risk reduction under the 10th European Development Fund. In the context of a rising number of climate-related disasters and increasing vulnerability of those affected, the EU has also invited Member States to consider allocating more resources to disaster risk reduction, taking into account the principles of division of labour, and in the context of agreed commitments for Official Development Assistance.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the EU looks forward to implementing the EU Strategy for disaster risk reduction in partnership with developing countries and other stakeholders and, through it, to contribute to the overall implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action. Together, we can make our development and humanitarian efforts more sustainable and more effective, and thereby achieve our common objectives.