

**Parliamentarians' Plan of Action for
Making Millennium Development Goal Programmes Disaster Resilient
2 June 2010, Dakar, Senegal**

We parliamentarians from Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Togo, Kenya and Senegal, met at the Consultative Meeting for West African Parliamentarians on Disaster Risk Reduction: An Instrument for Achieving Millennium Development Goals by 2015, from 1-2 June 2010, in Dakar, Senegal.

Our overall goal was to make Disaster Risk Reduction a priority at both the national and local levels, in order to increase our people's resilience to disasters and to support economic development in our respective countries. In West Africa, disasters and climate change have made it even harder for us to achieve the global pro-poor initiative – the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 – the highest pro-poor commitment made by 189 Heads of State in 2000 at the Summit of United Nations in New York.

During the two-day consultative meeting, we examined the impact of disasters on each of the Millennium Development Goals in West Africa, in the context of global trends, progress and the worldwide challenges of disaster risk reduction. In order to promote initiatives resilient to disasters and climate change which impact the Millennium Development Goals, we assessed what needs to be done in our respective countries. Importantly, we also discussed what actions we, as parliamentarians, should take to exercise our oversight roles and responsibilities for achieving disaster resilient Millennium Development Goals, in order to protect the people that we represent in our parliaments.

We are in agreement that disasters and climate change pose great threats to the protection of our people and their livelihoods. Their impacts in our societies seriously challenge our capacities and resources to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in the countries of West Africa. Our discussions highlighted the following:

1. Disasters in West Africa pose a significant threat to achieving the MDGs and compromise efforts at poverty reduction, causing loss of lives, livelihood and destruction of the means of production (MDG 1).
2. In West Africa, disasters destroy health system infrastructure. Schools which are flooded, as if often also the case with housing, diminish children's education (MDG2).
3. Persistent drought often provokes the displacement of communities to zones with out schools (MDG2).
4. Women in West Africa play an important role for food security for their families. Disasters increase their stress and workload, depriving women of time to address the needs of their families and leading girls to drop out of school to help at home (MDG3).
5. Climate related disasters affected not only hospitals, health facilities or critical medical centres, but also increase the risk of diseases such as malaria and cholera. In particular, floods cause damage to medical equipment and disrupt medical services in West Africa (MDG4,5,6).

6. Environmental issues, shared by countries in West Africa, include flooding, drought, desertification, deforestation, coastal erosion, locust invasion, forest fires, water pollution, soil salinization and storms, with their corollary impacts on food security and soil degradation. Environmental degradation increases the impact of disasters on people and our societies (MDG7).
7. Disasters pose a great challenge for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and require multi-stakeholder cooperation and collaboration at all levels. Existing partnerships for development are not adequate for concerted development action. It is imperative to strengthen partnerships for the success of achieving disaster resilience towards the Millennium Development Goals at the local and national levels (MDG8).

We came to the conclusion that we cannot achieve the Millennium Development Goals without addressing disaster vulnerability, risk and the impact of climate change. Disaster Risk Reduction should be considered an instrument for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It should be an integral and essential part of our strategies and programmes, aiming to avoid the creation of additional risks of disasters and climate changes effects in the development process.

We are conscious of the cross-cutting character of disaster risk reduction. Additionally, disaster risk reduction should be a collective responsibility involving every citizen. The result of our collective efforts will lead to the prevention of disaster risks, or at least to greatly reduce their potential impact on the population. We should promote effective policies for disaster risk reduction through cooperation and collaboration among different ministries and stakeholders at national and local level.

Certainly, there is a lot to be done, but we should above all incite our governments to make the above actions a priority, in harmony with the recommendations of a recent African Ministerial Conference held in Nairobi¹:

1. Set up a task force which can propel the integration of disaster risk reduction in poverty reduction policy, in close cooperation with international organization, especially UNDP and World Bank who are major development partners (MDG1).
2. Carry out a school safety assessment against the major hazards of each respective country, in partnership with national educational institutions as well as principal international partners such as UNESCO and UNICEF. Based on the results of these assessments, Governments should develop plans of action to make schools safe from disasters (MDG2).
3. Develop national policy and capacity to make disaster risk reduction gender sensitive. The policy should ensure that women will be able to participate in decision making processes relevant to disaster risk reduction (MDG3).
4. Ensure that hospitals and health facilities in general are hazards resistant and conform to established norms, and that health care workers are adequately trained for disaster preparedness for effective health care delivery in times of crisis, especially the most vulnerable who are women and children (MDG4,5,6).

¹ Second African Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, 14 – 16, April 2010.

5. Ensure good water management through Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), increasing our chances to achieve poverty reduction, food security, and better health and sanitation (MDG7).
6. Assess the necessity to establish global partnership and request that the international community uphold the international agreement under the UNFCCC², in particular technology transfer and development of effective early warning systems. At the same time, Governments should seek to increase national, regional and international cooperation which lead to increased capacity and financial resources for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. (MDG8)

We, parliamentarians, should assume our role and responsibility to engage fully in creating resilience to disasters that threaten the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in our countries. We will exercise the roles and responsibilities that our people entrust in us and will take the actions listed below in order to create an enabling political environment for disaster risk reduction in order to achieve Millennium Development Goals.

We, parliamentarians of this meeting, will:

1. Champion disaster risk reduction in our respective countries by pursuing a national network of parliamentarians on disaster risk reduction, aiming to integrate disaster risk assessment into development planning and programmes in development sectors, related to the MDGs.
2. Review our laws and legislation related to climate change adaptation, environment and disasters to make sure that they are complementary to each other and take necessary action to foster synergy between climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.
3. Act as agents for change to facilitate the integration of disaster risk reduction into all women focused projects and the integration of gender concerns and needs into disaster risk reduction.
4. Ensure that new water and sanitation infrastructure is built to be disaster resilient. With this in mind, we will support our governments to better develop coherent water resource management policies in line with poverty reduction, food security and improvement of water and sanitation.
5. Promote close regional and global partnerships for building more disaster and climate resilient infrastructure such as schools and hospitals. This requires transfer of technology, local innovative solution to climate change adaptation, information and knowledge sharing for risk reduction, and early warning among developed and developing countries.

To conclude, we reconfirm our commitment to the actions agreed above and will share the result of this consultative meeting with our respective parliaments. We propose to convene together in the near future to review progress and share our experience in our implementation of the above actions. In addition, we will advocate the link between disaster risk reduction and the Millennium Development Goals among activities of our respective parliaments at local, national, regional and global levels.

² UNFCCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.