

## **MESSAGE OF SENATOR LOREN LEGARDA**

*Opening of the UNISDR Caucus on Linking DRR and CCA for Effective Disaster Risk Governance in the Philippines  
December 21, 2011, Kobe, Hyogo, Japan*

It is my distinct pleasure to address you today at this *Caucus on Linking DRR and CCA for Effective Risk Governance in the Philippines*.

I am pleased that this forum, which I co-organized with UNISDR for an exclusive group of local government leaders, national government officials, and media professionals will facilitate substantive discussions on how we could effectively reduce disaster risks and adapt to climate change through strategic local actions.

I believe that your discussions are crucial in defining what remains for national and local governments to do in order to deliver to the Filipino people at the soonest possible time the benefits of reducing risks from disasters and climate change.

If there is one issue that cuts across all development concerns and all sectors, and involves everyone, it is disaster risk reduction. It is a fundamental strategy for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

My fellow leaders and public servants, thank you for attending this Caucus and for lending importance to our noble mission for the Filipino nation.

As political leaders, we play a critical role and assume a moral responsibility in arresting the chronic problem of disaster risk.

A conscientious lawmaker would not want to see the poor and the most vulnerable constantly drawn back to abject poverty for lack of government investment in disaster and climate risk reduction.

A responsible politician would not want the government to waste millions on buildings that may suddenly collapse on children during an earthquake.

We cannot and should not let disasters and climate change impacts derail our development efforts. The goal of sustainable development is within our reach if only we ensure that our development pursuits -- whether social, economic or environmental -- are not only well integrated but also resilient to disasters.

As UNISDR regional champion for the world's most disaster prone region, it is my personal duty to advocate for action and closer collaboration with the UNISDR.

Internationally, I have been meeting with heads of state, ministers, parliamentarians and city mayors of various countries in the region, primarily to secure political commitment, cooperation, and action in reducing disaster risk and increasing investment in community resilience.

Earlier this year, I have also co-organized with UNISDR a meeting of parliamentarians advocates of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation held in Incheon, South Korea, which tackled the legislative challenges that remain.

Today, as we tackle the challenges at the forefront of our battle against disasters and climate change -- which is the level of the community, we hold this Caucus to frame our actions and draw effective strategies to win the battle. And there is no more perfect place to hold this meeting than in Kobe, Hyogo, Japan, where leading best practices and invaluable lessons on disaster risk reduction could be readily shared and learned.

Internationally, our two laws on climate change and disaster risk management, which we labored much to get passed and enacted, have been considered model legislation by the UNISDR and the Inter-Parliamentary Union for other countries to emulate. This is one best practice that we could also share readily to the other nations. However, the world is keen on how these laws would translate into tangible and meaningful benefits for the people.

It is in this regard that I wish to count on your commitment to action --- as we altogether look forward to the full implementation of the Climate Change Act of 2009 and the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010, and the full enjoyment of their benefits by our people, especially the poor and most vulnerable.

As leaders, we have the mandate to usher change and to ensure that it happens.

Today, let us renew our commitment to responsible political leadership and effective risk governance and to work together towards more resilient Filipino communities, and a safer and more vibrant Filipino nation.

Thank you and Mabuhay.