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**Report on the Africa Working Group to the
Fourth Africa Regional Platform, Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania
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1. Introduction

A proposal for an African Working Group on disaster risk reduction to be convened was first made at a meeting of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force in November 2003. In June 2005, the UNISDR Africa office convened a meeting of an advisory group to discuss the objectives, responsibilities and constitution of the proposed African Working Group. The meeting was attended AUC, COMESA, ECOWAS Secretariat, IGAD Secretariat, NEPAD, UNISDR, and BCPR (Africa) AfDB.

In December 2005, the First African Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Addis Ababa called for the establishment of an Africa Working Group on DRR, to support the implementation of the Africa DRR Strategy and the Programme of Action. This was first proposed in a meeting in April 2010, in Nairobi, recommendation 2 of the Second African Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction “called on the African Union Commission to reconstitute the Africa Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction to provide coordination and technical support to Member States for the implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction and its Programme of Action.”

AUC and UNISDR held discussions on the activation of the Africa Working Group in October 2010 and in December AU Disaster Risk Reduction Workshop held in Nairobi further discussed the reconstitution of AWGDRR and agreed on draft membership and terms of reference. The African Working group was reconstituted and had its inaugural meeting in October 2011 in Nairobi

1. Overview of Mandate and Membership

The Terms of Reference of the Africa Working Group defines the purpose, objectives and constitution of the Africa Working Group (Annex 1)

The purpose of the Africa Working group on Disaster Risk Reduction is to provide coordination and technical support to AUC, RECs Member States and partners for the implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction and

its Programme of Action in line with the Hyogo Plan of Action. Its main functions are to advise and provide technical support, strengthen advocacy for disaster risk reduction and links with climate change, networking and assist in monitoring of the implementation of the Africa Programme of Action. The African Working Group has two categories of Membership: Core Group and an Extended Group

Membership of Core Group are AUC / NPCA, AfDB, 8 RECs, One Member State Expert per Region (8) to be designated by RECs, UNISDR, World Bank GFDRR, One Representative of Regional Specialized Entities (ACMAD), One Representative of the Civil Society and one Representative of Academia and Research Institutes (PERIPERIU). The extended is made up of all stakeholder and actors in disaster risk reduction similar in many ways to the composition of the Africa regional Platform. The African Union Commission is the Chair with Regional Economic Communities, alternating as Vice Chair as they host meetings of the group on rotational basis. The UNISDR and AUC serve as joint secretariat.

The rationale for two categories of membership is to have a smaller core group that meets regularly to transact of business while at the same time providing opportunities for participation of all relevant stakeholders for wider consultation.

The representation of Civil Society remains outstanding as we have not been able to identify a civil society organization with a continental reach.

2. Operations and Outputs

The Working group has held three meetings:

1. First Meeting – Inaugural Meeting, October 2011, Nairobi Kenya
2. Second Meeting, May 2012, Yaoundé, Cameroon
3. Third Meeting September 2012, Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania

Reports and Communiqué of all meetings are attached as annexes.

3.1 First Meeting

The main outputs of the first meeting were:

- Terms of Reference of the African Working group were discussed. The meeting made recommendations requested the AUC and UNISDR to update and revise the terms of reference for further discussion in the next meeting.
- Strategic Areas of Work for the AWGDRR was developed as well as key activities for the coming year, way forward and responsibilities.
- Implementation and monitoring of the Africa Programme of Action to implement the Africa Regional Strategy for DRR (PoA) was discussed and an online monitoring facility hosted by WFP was presented.
- Presentation by RECs on ongoing DRR activities in each region respectively as well as Gaps and challenges in the DRR implementation.
- Memberships in Core and Extended Group of the Africa Working Group was clarified and agreed.
- Two significant decisions were taken. First the meeting of the AWG would be hosted by RECs on rotational basis and second the host REC would be Vice-Chair for Meeting until the next meeting

2.2 Second Meeting, Yaoundé, May 2012

The Africa Working Group discussed and adopted the revised terms of reference which incorporated the provision for RECs as Vice-Chair on rotational basis and rotation of meetings of the AWG between RECs

The Africa Working Group received reports of an Africa Working Group website being developed on for monitoring implementation of the Africa Programme of Action and invited RECs to contribute to populate the website.

The Core Group received report on discussed funding possibilities from EC to implement the Africa Programme of Action and concluded that that more information is needed from EC on the process and modalities

The Working Group noted the draft a Terms of Reference for undertaking an institutional assessment for an African Centre for DRR as requested from Ministerial level and underlined the importance of strengthened knowledge networks in Africa.

The AWG advised strongly that there was a substantive need to hold a Ministerial Conference preceded by a Regional Platform as a technical level meeting for DRR in Africa during 2012. The main agenda points for the Ministerial Meeting would include:

- i. Africa's position to the post HFA framework
- ii. Report on the process of the Centres of Excellence, as requested by Ministers
- iii. Report on functions and activities of the AWG, as requested by Ministers
- iv. Report on DRR investments as spelled out in Ministerial Declaration point 7

Key decisions

1. Criteria for Centres of Excellence should be translated into Portuguese, French and Arabic and sent to RECs for further consultations with Member States
2. The process of institutional assessment on Centres of Excellence should proceed

3.3 Third Meeting, Zanzibar, September, 2012

The AWG reported on the progress made in implementing their regional strategies which are in line with the Africa Strategy and Programme for DRR and the Hyogo Framework of Action to build the resilience of nations and communities to disasters. The AWG agreed on a wide variety of measures and activities to advance the process of building resilience of communities including potential contribution of

indigenous knowledge to reducing disaster risk; integration of DRR into education, the need for improve information flows between States on DRR, including more use of networks, practical information exchanges, and building linkages between institutions, not just at national level but also regional; the priority of building institutional capacities; better representation civil society in DRR commitments and policy decisions; importance of early warning, risk information and hazard mapping for disaster preparedness, so hazard mapping and the production of other such data should be encouraged; the role of the media,; the need to enhance meteorological capacities; the establishment of regional emergency funds; the priority of mainstreaming and integrating disaster risk reduction and resilience into all development planning and programmes; and the y, the overriding principle is that disaster risk reduction and resilience is fundamentally a development issue. It is crucial to safeguard development gains; and sustainable economic growth is interdependent with the extent countries can reduce disaster risk and ensure their disaster resilience.

The meeting recognized the need to step up actions towards capacity-building and in that context the need for increased efforts in resources mobilization

The Communiqué

In recognition of the above, the African Working group adopted a joint Communiqué Recognizing “the need for an intra-regional cooperation initiative in Africa (which was discussed in terms of a “continental approach”), to accelerate and scale up the implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy and Programme of Action for Disaster Risk Reduction 2006-2015; in particular, with a view to supporting African institutions to develop sustainable capacities for the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction and building the resilience of African communities accordingly.”

“Accordingly, through this Communiqué, the AWG wish to call upon the European Commission and the ACP Secretariat to support a continental initiative to accelerate and systematically scale DRR implementation efforts across Africa, through a request to the 10th European Development Fund before it closes in December this

year.”

The African Working group further advised the African Union Commission to seek an audience with ACP Secretariat, in order to secure the support of the ACP Secretariat for the allocation of 80 million Euros from the 10th European Development Fund to support African institutions to develop sustainable capacities for the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction and building the resilience of African communities.

A joint mission Brussels, of the African Union Commission and United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), took place on November 6-7, 2012, and further negotiations are proceeding.

3. Conclusions

4.1 Lessons

Regular meetings of the African Working Group facilitate regular progress reports from RECs. This is a perhaps a first step towards more systematic assessments of progress in the implementation of the POA. Coordination and planning and identification of priorities for the implementation of the African Programme of Action on a continental basis are being enhanced. But for this to have to have real impact in implementation AUC plans need to be synchronized with those of the RECS. This requires greater capacity of dedicated DDR units at the regional and sub-regional levels. Zanzibar Communiqué also demonstrates that The AWG can prove a strong political voice for resource mobilization.

4.2 Challenges

The main challenge in the operations of the Africa Working group is resources. A dedicated budget line is required to help the Group meet regularly. As suggested, there is also a need to synchronize planning between RECs, AUC and UNISDR. In the context the either the second meeting of AWG at the end of the year of the first meeting of the AWG should facilitate this planning exercise. Tools such the AWG website and a monitoring tool need be put in place to strengthen reporting and

monitoring. The AWG should also begin to use Task Forces provided for in their terms of reference to address specific technical tasks.

Finally, the composition of the Extended AWG suggests that it is in fact the Africa Regional Platform. We therefore propose to rephrase the Term of Reference to “ “ The Africa Working Group will report to the African Regional Platform, which will also serve as the Extended African Working Group” and that we delete references to Core and Extended Groups.