

Concept Note on

Second Middle East and North Africa Regional Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

Sana'a, Republic of Yemen, 21-23 October 2008

Background

The Middle East and North Africa region is prone to various types of disasters caused by natural hazards such as earthquakes, floods and drought. Disasters impose increasingly heavy human and material losses on the countries of this region which hamper their long term socio-economic development. The recent earthquakes in Iran, Algeria and Morocco, and droughts and floods in several other countries of the region, are just examples of various disasters which occur in the region on regular basis and cause considerable damages and losses.

The countries of the Middle East and North Africa have developed considerable capacities in the area of disaster preparedness and response, but long term disaster risk reduction and prevention planning linked to national development processes still are new paradigm in the region. The long term measures for disaster risk reduction became even more important considering its link with some other global challenges like climate change.

To support the efforts of the countries of Middle East and North Africa on disaster risk reduction at national and regional levels, the secretariat of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR) and the World Bank initiated a regional programme in 2007 under the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR). This programme included a regional stocktaking on natural hazards and risk as well as a consultation on possibilities for cooperation at regional level. The first component of the programme resulted in the Middle East and North Africa Regional Risk Review, and the second component of the programme resulted in the **"First Regional Conference on Building Partnerships for Disaster Risk Reduction and Hazard Risk Management" which was held in Cairo from 18 to 21 April 2007**. The conference was very successful in achieving its key objective of bringing together, for the first time in the MENA region, representatives of governments, practitioners, NGOs, donors and academia from institutions across the MENA region currently involved in disaster risk reduction. It also included guests from other regions (i.e. Latin America and Asia), both as guest speakers and resource persons. It is noteworthy to mention that 72 participants attended the conference, representing governments from 12 countries and 17 different development agencies active in the region.

While the Cairo conference participants clearly confirmed the need to develop sustainable regional collaborations and partnerships in the area of Disaster Risk reduction (DRR), it is still too early in the process to know what shape such collaborations will take. Experiences from other regions

clearly show that the development and institutionalization of sustainable regional collaborations are long term processes.

The conference participants reached a consensus on moving forward incrementally, setting shorter-term objectives and reassessing the way forward at every step in the process. It was agreed that the first important milestone in this process would be the preparation of a second regional conference this year. This event will be used as an opportunity to further engage the key regional stakeholders and DRR practitioners in the process of identifying priority focus areas to be addressed by the regional conference, starting with a focus on data gathering and generation at regional and national level. As a result of some consultations and also based on the offer received from the Government of the Republic of Yemen to host this event, it was agreed to hold the **"Second Middle East and North Africa Regional Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction" in Sanaa , Republic of Yemen from 21-23 October 2008.**

Objectives:

- To support disaster risk reduction efforts and initiatives at national and regional levels by providing an opportunity for cooperation between various stakeholders in the region,
- To contribute to exchange of expertise and knowledge on disaster risk reduction among the governments and other stakeholders of the region as well as with other regions,
- To follow up the implementation of the Recommendations of the First MENA Regional Conference (April 2007),
- To support development of key disaster risk reduction tools such as Regional Risk Assessment Guidelines,
- Contribution from the Middle East and North Africa region to the preparation of the Global Risk Assessment Report (GAR) to be presented to the Second Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction due to take place in 2009.

Main Themes:

Based on the previous objectives, the main themes of the Yemen Conference will be:

- Disaster Risk Reduction, challenges and opportunities in the MENA region,
- Disaster Risk Assessment in the MENA region, "methodologies and tools".

Methodology:

- Undertake consultations with the anticipated participants on progress made regarding the implementation of the recommendations of the First MENA Regional Conference,

- Organizing topical sessions based on the main themes of the Conference,
- Ensure active participation of all participants through working groups in the Conference.

Participants

- Governments of the Middle East and North Africa.
- Key regional organizations.
- Representatives of UN agencies and other international organizations.
- Academic and technical institutions in the region.
- Relevant experts.
- Civil society including community based organizations.