

Conference on Preparedness in Berlin, 11 June 2013

Principles and Recommendations on Preparedness

Meeting today in Berlin, representatives of disaster prone countries, members of the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative, other donors and of International and Non-Governmental Organizations (“the participants”)* expressed their deep concern for the continuing human suffering caused by the increased intensity of natural disasters worldwide and the rising numbers of victims as well as the growing need for humanitarian assistance. Participants noted in particular that emergency response alone whilst saving lives, does not reduce vulnerability and may not safeguard livelihoods. The challenges disaster prone countries, humanitarian actors and donors are facing represent a qualitative change which urges us to shift from a reactive approach to establishing a culture of safety, risk management and resilience.

Disasters derail development. Participants were united in their agreement that strengthening emergency preparedness and recognition of the inherent link between preparedness and sustainable development, are essential to address the growing mismatch between scarce resources and an increase in humanitarian needs. The participants therefore stressed the importance of implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 - Building the Resilience of Nations and the need to fully implement recommendations under priority five “disaster preparedness”. They underlined the importance of preparedness to remain a key part in the post HFA framework. They recalled the Busan Partnership for Effective Development and its commitment to increase the resources, planning and skills for disaster management at the national and regional levels in order to increase the value and sustainability of development efforts. They reiterated their active support to efforts to reform and strengthen the humanitarian system including the Transformative Agenda, all of which are contributing to an effective and cooperative international approach to crises and disasters and a strengthened collaboration of humanitarian actors to increase national and local capacity development for preparedness and response.

Participants appreciated that the issue of improving emergency preparedness and removing existing barriers to it has been intensely discussed in a series of meetings since fall 2011. As a result of these discussions and today’s meeting and building on the joint stakeholders’ experience, the participants have identified basic principles and consider recommended actions which need to be observed for attaining better preparedness:

1. Each State has the primary responsibility to protect its citizens from disasters. In disaster prone countries, national and local authorities should therefore make disaster risk reduction, including risk management and preparedness a priority. At the same time, these should not be stand-alone measures but integrated in all development and humanitarian planning processes. Comprehensive and up-to date legislative arrangements for disaster risk reduction and preparedness are key means to achieve these goals.
2. States, national and local authorities, civil society organizations (including the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) and communities in disaster prone countries have to take ownership for building resilience through enhanced disaster risk reduction, including preparedness. Without their sustained commitment national and international efforts will not attain their full effectiveness.
3. Political leadership and high-level support for preparedness are critical and need to be enhanced. This applies to disaster prone countries, donors, agencies, civil society, national organizations, NGOs, Red Cross/Red Crescent National Societies alike and requires all relevant actors to promote emergency preparedness, and link it to sustainable social and economic development objectives, within their respective constituencies, strongly reaching out to the media and the broader public. It includes integrating preparedness into policy and planning, and allotting dedicated and adequate resources for their implementation.
4. Building national and local capacities for preparedness is a key humanitarian concern but requires a development approach based on coherent and coordinated capacity development investments through multi-year programmes.
5. Risk identification and early warning are core element of preparedness; they are however only useful if followed by early action. It is imperative for stakeholders to adapt their decision-making procedures and financial regulations in order to encourage and allow for early action. Coherent early action requires systematic, comprehensive and common risk analysis.
6. Closer cooperation between international, national and local stakeholders is essential for the effectiveness and sustainability of emergency preparedness measures. In particular, humanitarian and development actors need to strengthen cooperation, improve communication and ensure complementarity in their respective roles and responsibilities. This is particularly urgent in situations of chronic vulnerability or protracted crises that demand a shift from the linear relief to development approach to a more integrated

modus operandi which addresses short, medium and long term needs simultaneously. To facilitate this process, governments should develop, prior to the outset of a crisis, clear domestic rules and procedures for managing future international assistance.

7. The proposed Common Framework for Capacity Development for Preparedness offers a setting for closer and more effective cooperation of all relevant stakeholders. Within this framework, and while the leadership within the UN system at country level is clear, agreement should be reached on which organisations should take the lead in coordinating preparedness capacity development activities by the international organisations that come in support of national governments. Subject to the upcoming finalisation of the envisaged arrangements under the Common Framework, the participants expressed strong interest to coordinate their efforts through this framework to ensure an integrated and coherent approach to preparedness, building on nationally owned and comprehensive risk and capacity assessments.
8. Successful examples of simple and cost-effective measures that build emergency preparedness exist; they should be replicated. Participants therefore noted the annexed “Compilation of Principles and Recommendations on Preparedness from a series of Workshops and Meetings” based on good practices compiled by disaster prone countries, donors, international and non-governmental organizations in several workshops preceding the meeting. They acknowledged the need to continue documenting, sharing and disseminating good practices and scale them up in a more systematic manner. Existing platforms should be used to further elaborate a systematic approach to preparedness measures and to monitor progress in implementation.

Participants welcomed proposals to address emergency preparedness as a pragmatic entry point and fundamental component of the broader theme of “reducing vulnerability and managing risk” resilience agenda at the “World Humanitarian Summit” which was called for in the UN Secretary General’s “Five Year Action Agenda”. They acknowledged the need to give emergency preparedness a prominent space in a post Hyogo framework for disaster risk reduction and encouraged stakeholders to reflect on ways of introducing common standards for better preparedness thus drawing the maximum benefit from the good practices developed so far.

*Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Costa Rica, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Haiti, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Luxemburg, Mexiko, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Viet Nam

FAO, IASC, OCHA, UNDP, UNICEF, UNISDR, WFP, WHO

EU (ECHO), IFRC, OECD

CARE Germany, Caritas Internationalis, DKKV, German Red Cross, Johanniter Unfallhilfe e.V., Malteser International, Oxfam, Save the Children, World Vision

Deutsche Post DHL, GIZ, GESI.

While the participants named in this list have taken part in the discussion process and generally agree with the findings, they do not necessarily endorse every point of the above Principles and Recommendations.