

**Joint UN Statement – 2nd Arab Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction
Sharm-el-Sheikh, 14-16 September 2014**

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Excellencies, distinguished delegates, colleagues,

I am pleased to read this statement on behalf of the United Nations system working in support of Arab populations to reduce disaster risk and build resilience under the Hyogo Framework for Action, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) and the Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2020.

The Arab region is highly exposed to various risks, related mainly to drought, floods, seismicity and uncontrolled urban growth. The negative effects of climate change are increasingly felt in the region. Water scarcity affects 19 out of 22 Arab countries and desertification is a major problem in 17. The region is extremely prone to conflicts, which further deepens vulnerabilities of Arab populations. Occurrence of so called “natural disasters” tripled over the last 30 years. These affected more than 37 million people leading to 150.000 casualties. The loss to Arab economies was estimated to be around 20 billion dollars during this period.

The UN system has enshrined its commitment to the DRR through its country development assistance frameworks and implementation of the UN Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience, endorsed by the Executive Heads of 29 UN entities in April 2013.

As Arab stakeholders discuss the Arab position towards the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction, the UN stands ready to assist and wishes to underline the following priorities as critical to be considered in the HFA successor agreement in the following terms:

1. Anticipation and preparedness for long-term risk scenarios should be prioritized to prevent the creation of new risk, reduce existing risk and strengthen economic and social resilience of countries and people
2. Significant improvement of the normative framework and governance for DRR at national and local level and adoption of sound policies, programmes and legislation to facilitate and resource DRR and crises management capacities including at the local level.

3. Tangible action to achieve milestones to implement DRR in Arab States in a proactive, complementary, coordinated and timely manner. Implementation will be based on a multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach, which includes and facilitate engagement by private sector, academia, volunteer groups and NGOs. It will entail the establishment of strong functional national and sub-national coordination mechanisms and empowerment of national focal points for DRR with sufficient authority and financial resources to play their critical convening role.
4. Vulnerable and marginalized groups need to be engaged as partners in DRR actions. This calls for inclusive policies and actions that empower and protect children, youth, women, elderly persons, people with disabilities, migrants, and displaced and refugee populations. Therefore, the new framework for disaster risk reduction should put greater focus on underlying inequities and disparities to be addressed as risk drivers.
5. The importance of the role of women as leaders in disaster risk reduction is of particular importance in Arab States region, where women are often not sufficiently part of DRR set ups.
6. Strengthened availability and access to reliable disaggregated and regularly updated information, including assessments of risks, losses and damages associated with all types of hazards. These will support decision making for DRR and regional disaster response effectively.
7. Further integration of disaster risk reduction in local and national development and investments plans in key development sectors and adoption of effective and pro-poor social protection and safety nets for the most vulnerable
8. Particular consideration should be given to urban risks and local action to strengthen urban resilience bearing in mind the high growth rate and the large exposure of Arab citizens and their assets to multiple natural and man-made hazards.
9. Understanding and addressing underlying risks and vulnerabilities, linking disaster risk reduction to societal hazards, such as conflict, social unrest and financial crises as commonalities in the approaches to managing the respective risks.
10. Ecosystem-based DRR and natural resource management as a holistic approach to build disaster resilient communities especially in coastal areas.
11. Disaster recovery frameworks at all levels should promote increased preparedness and integrate disaster risk reduction for resilience into post-disaster reconstruction, specially focusing on safer schools and health facilities.

12. Increased accountability for disaster risk reduction based on clear roles and responsibilities identified for local, provincial and national governments, the private sector, civil society and regional organizations. In this context, setting commitments through the introduction of specific sectoral goals, time-bound targets and indicators in order to systematically mainstream DRR where it is most needed should be considered. The revisited Arab Strategy for DRR 2020 needs to be accompanied and implemented through a workable Action Framework with SMART indicators to assess progress and measure results to be achieved by identified actors.
13. It is essential that the new framework is coherent with the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals and any future agreement on climate change action, in order to achieve integrated, cost-effective, and efficient solutions in countries. This should be reinforced by the alignment and cross-referral of indicators and targets for the respective frameworks and by a shared approach to monitoring and reporting of loss and damages.

The UN system is committed to support Arab States to achieve resilient and sustainable development under the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction in particular where its agencies and programmes have a comparative advantage.

Thank you.

The Joint Statement by the UN System delivered at the 2nd Arab Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction was prepared by agencies involved in the Middle East and North Africa DRR Network and complements the Joint Statement by the UN System delivered at the First Preparatory Committee Meeting of the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR) (available at: [http://www.preventionweb.net/files/globalplatform/jointunstatement\[1\].pdf](http://www.preventionweb.net/files/globalplatform/jointunstatement[1].pdf)) with inclusion of particular aspects related to Arab States region. Contributing agencies to this statement include: ESCWA, FAO, UNEP, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNICEF, UNISDR, UNOCHA, UN Volunteers, WFP and WHO.