

Third Arab Preparatory Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

Implementing the Sendai Framework 2015-2030

April 30- May 1 2017, Doha, State of Qatar

Background:

i) Disaster Risk in the Arab Region

The Arab region is exposed to various hazards ranging from geological hazards such as earthquakes, tsunamis and landslides to hydro-meteorological hazards such as floods, drought, cyclones and extreme weather events. These disasters can lead to losses in lives and property, especially when natural hazards are coupled with high exposure of population and assets as well as increased vulnerability. Disasters are also exacerbated by a lack of risk sensitive development, environmental degradation, accelerated, unplanned urban growth, poverty and weak risk governance. In the past 30 years, more than 164,000 persons were killed in the Arab region due to disasters. In addition, some 70 million people were affected, and the economic damages due to disasters triggered by natural hazards were estimated at US\$19.2 billion. However, global data reveals that direct disaster economic losses are around 60 per cent higher than those internationally reported, as illustrated in the UN Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) 2015.

Other factors are further amplifying vulnerabilities and increasing risk in the Arab region. In addition to rapid urbanization, water scarcity and a fast growing population with changing demographics are adding further stress to governmental policies and programmes related to development and risk management. More than 60% of Arab populations lives in urban areas. In some Arab countries this percentage exceeds 85% of the total population. Insecurity and conflict in Arab countries, coupled with poverty and weak risk governance have drastically reduced the ability of communities to withstand shocks from natural hazards. There is also an increasing risk associated with the fragility of

infrastructure coupled with lack of investments in disaster risk reduction

ii) Progress on disaster risk reduction in the Arab Region

Nonetheless, the Arab region is steadily working towards consolidating progress on disaster risk reduction. Despite the political complexities and humanitarian crises in the region, many Arab countries are taking steps to enhance their disaster risk reduction capacities at national and local levels as well as strengthening regional cooperation and coordination. The increased political commitment and technical engagement was manifested in the region's active participation at the Third United Nations World Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR) that took place in Sendai, Japan in March 2015.

Following the adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 at the WCDRR, UNISDR Regional Office for Arab States worked closely with the League of Arab States and its member states to strengthen policy guidance and advocacy in order to ensure that regional policies and commitments are aligned with the goal, targets and priorities of Sendai Framework and the outcomes of WCDRR, while accounting for the specificities of the Arab region. Furthermore, in 2015, the Second Arab High Level Forum on Sustainable Development recognized the linkages between disasters, disaster risk reduction and sustainable development as reflected in the Forum's "Bahrain Document", which took note of the: *"increased frequency of natural hazards, desertification in particular, and the exacerbation of their impact, which necessitate the development of early warning systems, the adoption of measures to manage risk and build resilience, and an integrated approach that achieves sustainability*

by avoiding exposure to new risks, minimizing current risks and working towards sustainable urban development.”

Preparatory conferences, meetings and forums

Preparatory meetings for Disaster Risk Reduction serve to review, develop and align regional strategies and action plans in order to reduce risk and build the resilience of communities and nations to natural disasters. Furthermore, they aim to strengthen disaster risk reduction efforts through better communication and coordination.

Arab regional meetings including those held in Aqaba, Jordan and Sharm El-Shiekh, Egypt have been an essential mechanism used to review and assess progress on implementation of disaster risk reduction in the Arab region and for sharing best practices and exchanging knowledge on DRR policies and programmes in the region.

The 1st Arab Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (March 2013, Aqaba – Jordan)

Organized by the League of Arab States, UNDP and UNISDR, with support from the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), the Conference was an opportunity for all stakeholders in the region to convene and discuss DRR challenges and progress in the Arab Region – including HFA implementation and the post 2015 Agenda.

The 1st Arab conference on DRR adopted the “Aqaba Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction in Arab Cities”, which identified concrete measures and sets targets to be met in order to build resilience and minimize losses from disasters.

The 2nd Arab Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (September 2014, Sharm El Sheikh – Egypt)

UNISDR, in coordination with League of Arab States, organized the 2nd Arab Conference on Disaster Risk

Reduction in September 2014. The conference addressed DRR challenges and progress made in the Arab Region and developed the Arab position for the post 2015 framework for disaster risk reduction. Participants adopted the “Sharm El Sheikh Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction”, which reflects Arab specific DRR challenges, those related to climate change, drought, desertification, food and water security issues.

Arab Regional Meeting on the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction:

This meeting took place at the League of Arab States in Cairo in November 2015. Participants, underlined the need to update the Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction to take into account the adoption of the Sendai Framework for DRR 2015-2030, the Sharm El-Sheikh Declaration for DRR and the CAMRE resolution no. (444)

To take the process forward, UNISDR and the League of Arab States convened a regional meeting to develop a “regional road map “for the implementation of the Sendai Framework 2015-2030. The meeting brought together more than 120 participants representing 15 Arab countries that also included local governments, representatives from academic and scientific institutions, civil society, youths, NGOs, and international organizations. Some of the outcomes of this meeting are mentioned below:

- The Arab Strategy for DRR 2020 reviewed and discussed in light of Sendai's outcomes;
- Proposed monitoring mechanisms for DRR in the Arab region discussed and elaborated in view of Sendai Framework's targets and proposed indicators taking into account SDGs monitoring plans in the Arab region;
- The Arab Region Science and Technical Advisory Group on DRR launched;
- The Making Cities Resilient campaign re-introduced with improved tools and

proposed local indicators to measure progress on disaster risk reduction.

The outcomes of this meeting and the recommendations to take forward the Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction were submitted for the consideration of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) at their meeting at the League of Arab States headquarters in Cairo on November 19, 2015.

Preparation for the 2017 Global Platform

The Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, as recognized by the UN General Assembly (UNGA), is the main international forum to provide strategic guidance, coordination, partnership development and for the review of progress in the implementation of international instruments on disaster risk reduction. The Government of Mexico will host the upcoming Global Platform, to be held from 22-26 May 2017 in Cancun, Mexico. This conference will facilitate dialogue and exchanges among all stakeholders, both governmental and non-governmental. Participants, heads of states and governments as well as ministers. It will enable governments, NGOs, scientists, practitioners, and UN organizations to share experience on DRR. It is the first global forum that will review global, regional and national progress on the implementation of the Sendai Framework since its adoption in March 2015.

The 3rd Arab Preparatory Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

The 3rd Arab Preparatory Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction will be hosted by the State of Qatar in Doha, from April 30 - May 1 2017. The conference is also organized in collaboration with the League of Arab States and UNISDR. Participants will take the opportunity to review regional progress on the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and hare best practices and lessons learned

Expected Outcomes:

It is envisaged that the Conference will seek to achieve the following outcomes:

- i. Updated Arab strategy for DRR 2030 with a programme of work aligned with Sendai Framework in order to strengthen political commitment and investment in DRR in Arab states in support of sustainable development;
- ii. An Arab declaration/statement for disaster risk reduction to be submitted to the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Cancun Mexico;
- iii. Promote dialogue and exchange among national and local governments, UN and other intergovernmental organizations, and the academic community on disaster risk reduction;
- iv. Share knowledge, good practices and experiences to strengthen disaster risk management, climate change adaptation and sustainable development in the region;
- v. Mobilized the science and technology community to support disaster risk reduction efforts.

Themes for Discussion:

- Theme 1: Understanding risk for improved linkages with climate change and sustainable development;
- Theme 2: Strengthening Disaster Risk Governance;
- Theme 3: Updated Arab Strategy for Disaster risk reduction 2030;
- Theme 4: Monitoring the Sendai Framework for DRR – Challenges and Opportunities;
- Theme 5: Role of Science and Technology in Disaster Risk Reduction.