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**Human Rights & Disaster Risk Reduction**

**Public Statement   
Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (3rd Session), May 2011, Geneva - Switzerland**

Distinguished delegates,

Despite the acknowledgment by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in 2008 that a Human Rights based approach (HRBA) shall guide Disaster Risk Mitigation, including pre-disaster mitigation and preparedness measures, **little has been done to bridge and raise awareness about the added-value of human rights law to ensure mainstreaming of DRR in governmental activities.**

The system of human rights, as a legal framework, is continuously developing thanks both to increasing voluntary commitments undertaken by States and through the improvement of means of implementation. It represents an appropriate tool to promote the implementation by States of the principles of the Hyogo Framework for Action in the field of *Disaster Risk Reduction*, as I shall briefly expand in my intervention.

Natural disasters and conflicts affect directly the enjoyment of fundamental human rights. As a matter of fact destroyed shelters, lack of food or illnesses, all these realities impact directly the enjoyment of fundamental human rights of affected populations, such as the right to housing, the right to food, the right to health or the right to water & sanitation. In other words, **there can be no enjoyment of human rights without integration of the DRR component within State activities**.

In this context, it is therefore important to assert that the principles of the Hyogo Framework for Action can be interpreted as principles of implementation of the three categories of obligations that States are required to comply with respect to the enjoyment of all human rights, namely the obligations **to respect, to protect and to fulfill** basic human rights.

The **obligation to respect** can require States to make sure they do not prevent humanitarian workers to access the beneficiaries of prevention, mitigation & adaptation measures.The **obligation to protect** their local population from infringements on their human rights can require States to ensure that DRR is national priority (cf. HFA Priority 1). It also requires States to identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning (cf. HFA Priority 2). Finally, the **obligation to fulfill** basic human rights can require States to allocate budget resources to improve knowledge, innovation, as well as reduction of underlying risk factors (cf. HFA Priority 3 and 4) including imposing some budget priorities on those subjects, possibly involving budget cuts on other items if the priority of the implementation as a matter of human rights is acknowledged.

Further, human rights obligations of States have a clear impact in terms of processes, procedures and institutions. **Human Rights procedural rights guarantees** can require States to inform and provide adequate education to their population, in particular affected populations and vulnerable groups in the field of DRR and climate change (cf. **right to access information**). They also can require population’s involvement in the development of policies (cf. **right to participation**) as well as the monitoring of their implementation through effective accountability mechanisms (cf. **right to remedy**).

As a result, DRR can become a matter of complying with legal commitments signed upon under international law, and Governments cannot simply take a few steps without clearly presenting how DRR fits into the overall development strategy of the country as a priority to comply with human rights.

**As a conclusion, WaterLex therefore recommends:**

1. **The acknowledgment by States of the DRR component within their obligations to respect, protect and fulfill basic human rights of their local population.**
2. **The acknowledgment and mainstreaming of a human rights based approach to improve the implementation and efficiency of the DRR legal, policy and institutional framework.**