UK STATEMENT

GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

19 - 23 May 2013

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Thank you, Madam Chair, the United Kingdom is grateful for this opportunity to make a statement. And I would like to thank ISDR for organising this Fourth Global Platform Meeting.

The expected increase in the frequency and scale of disasters could have a profound impact on lives and livelihoods. Better managing these risks warrants much greater attention, so that economic growth and development gains are safeguarded.

Although we believe emphasis should be given to helping low income countries, who are most vulnerable to natural shocks, no one is immune. In the UK last year, the wettest in the last 100 years, the overall cost of flooding, just to insurers, was over £1 billion and is why we are spending over £2 billion between 2011 and 2015 on flood prevention measures.

Our commitment to reducing our vulnerability and continually improving our ability to identify, assess, warn and then, as necessary, respond and recover effectively from emergencies of all kinds is reflected in our willingness to volunteer to be the first country to be peer reviewed on our implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA).

Experts from Sweden, Italy and Finland, assisted by officials from the UN, OECD and the European Commission interviewed more than 90 people from across UK government departments, NGOs, the private sector, academia and civil society during 7 days in September 2012.

The final report is positive about the UK’s approach highlighting many good practices, such as the “large use of science to support policy; (the) attention to business-continuity issues, (the) partnerships (made) with the private sector and a national commitment to continue improving policy-making”.

It also helpfully identified some areas where more could be done, for example:

* setting-up a disaster-loss database to help assess the outcome of prevention work;
* further developing our Natural Hazards Partnership, which brings together expertise from the UK’s leading public sector agencies to deliver scientific advice in the preparation, response and review of natural hazards;
* further supporting volunteer organisations in their work with Local Resilience teams; and
* working more closely with INGOs to ensure expertise in the UK can be used overseas and vice-versa.

We are continuing to digest the findings of the Review and considering how best to prioritise our efforts, but our overall feeling is that it provided an excellent learning experience and we would encourage others to follow suit.

Building disaster resilience is also a priority issue for the UK internationally.

The Department of International Development has committed to build disaster resilience into all its 28 country programmes by 2015. This is already underway and a set of minimum standards have been reached in eight country programmes.

We are also promoting disaster resilience internationally. The Secretary of State for International Development, Justine Greening, co-chairs with UNDP Adminstrator Helen Clark an informal group of Political Champions to promote greater focus and investment in disaster resilience.

Last month, the two of them led a visit to Haiti where they agreed a programme of action with the Government to help sustain economic growth and stability. Another key focus is supporting regional efforts to build resilience in the Horn and Sahel.

In addition to their country-level focus, another core objective of this Group is to stimulate greater private sector engagement in building resilience, including stimulating insurance penetration in lower income countries. We are therefore delighted that engaging the private sector is a key theme of this year’s GAR.

We look forward to discussions on a successor to the HFA over the next few days. The UK is currently planning our consultation process and we will contribute more specific recommendations on HFA2 on the back of this.

In approaching this, there are five key issues we are keen to explore:

* **The first is improving accountability** – including through the peer review mechanism, and setting clearer targets and indicators and improving the means to measure them.
* Second, ensuring this agenda is both **a humanitarian and development priority.** Upfront investment in disaster resilience is better value for money than humanitarian response and recovery.We need to align closely the HFA2 with the wider post 2015 development process, and also promote taking a broader and more integrated approach to risk management, including for example, health risks such as pandemics.
* Third, we need to focus better on tackling the **root causes of vulnerability**. There is a need to focus on the political and institutional bottlenecks to building resilience, as well as technical fixes. This includes issues like marginalisation, weak institutions and land tenure.
* Fourth, we need to focus on the **most vulnerable**. We need to reduce the disproportionate impact that disasters have on women and girls, as well as making sure they have a central role in building resilience. Of particular note, is ensuring greater focus on strengthening resilience in fragile and conflict affected states.
* Fifth, we need to move the focus from the **national to the local and community level** to encourage a more inclusive approach.

In conclusion, building disaster resilience is high on the UK agenda both domestically and internationally. We look forward to working closely with you all in setting the direction post 2015.

Thank you