

## **Official Statement by Dr Carlos Foradori (Argentina), Chair of the ISDR Support Group Global Platform for Disaster Reduction 2009**

1. Two years ago I assumed the chairmanship of the Support Group. It was an enormous responsibility for me, particularly in replacing such a wonderful person, Marco Ferrari, who represented a country with a historical record in terms of humanitarian issues, Switzerland. The ISDR is still a baby and requires a lot of care-taking. I considered it my mission to nourish this creature, with the help of all the member states of the Support Group and with the invaluable cooperation of the Secretariat of the ISDR.

2. I think that the timing of the II Session of the Global Platform is exquisite. Right after the launching of the Global Assessment Report which described in black and white the threatening imbalances that sustain life on this planet. A report that gives us the notion that the sky is choking us, the sea level is rising to inundate us, the stratospheric ozone is now depleted and the forest has been destroyed. This is no longer a catastrophic description of a science fiction movie, but a perverse objective that mankind seems to be determined to accomplish. Certainly, it is not entirely like that, and that is why the ISDR exists, with an initiative originated and undertaken by the collective conscience of human beings.

3. I am also saying that the timing of the II Session of the Global Platform is exquisite because it takes place a few months before to the COP-15 when many countries will have another opportunity to revise their positions towards a better understanding of the danger that is placed ahead of us. For some this threat is far in the horizon, for every step forward, the risk moves forward another step. However, it is not like that, the peril will be ever-nearer us as long as we do nothing to reverse this process. We are responsible, not only for us, but mainly for the generations to come.

4. Based upon this principle and philosophy, we worked hard during these past two years. There were four major topics that the ISDR Support Group looked at repeatedly during this time:

- a. Taking stock of the recommendations emanating from the first Global Platform, and active advisory function in preparing for the second session;
- b. Periodic updates on progress reporting on the Hyogo Framework and the preparation of the Global Assessment Report;
- c. Financing constraints and opportunities for disaster risk reduction in general, tracking of investments and UNISDR secretariat's financial situation;
- d. How to better link climate change and disaster risk reduction and how to promote this subject in the negotiations on climate change

5. The efforts of the UNISDR secretariat and the ISDR Support Group Members in the Advisory Group are reflected in the remarkable number of delegates registered for this second session of the Global Platform. A number, that speaks for itself. Disaster risk Reduction content is also featuring much higher in the climate change community and negotiations, partly due to our joint efforts.

6. Representing the ISDR Support Group, I attended ECOSOC side events and meetings with delegates in NY to prepare for the General Assembly discussions on ISDR Resolutions in 2007 and 2008.

7. The first edition of the biennial Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction was launched in the Kingdom of Bahrain just one month ago. The Report's central message is that disaster risk and poverty are strongly linked and are in turn intertwined with the reality of global climate change. I will not go into details about the Report, but on behalf of all the ISDR Support Group Members, I would like to congratulate UNISDR and its partners for the successful launch and dissemination of the Report. We will also use the findings for reflection on our discussions during the Global Platform and for the Mid-term review of the Hyogo Framework, which will be our next major undertaking. We will have an additional briefing on the process and content of the report during this meeting.

8. Along these two years, the ISDR, without a doubt, grew steadily and significantly, and our meetings served many times as an engine designed to disseminate around the globe the importance of the major values and principles of the Hyogo Framework of Action. Many regions, many countries, and most importantly, many communities, large and small, adopted the HFA as a central column to cement their policies. Every day, every month and every year we are building up the global conscience about the importance of disaster risk reduction. It is not necessary to mention every single event related to the ISDR but, a few days ago, on 2 June, a Resolution (2372/XXXVIII) was adopted by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States, reinforcing the activities of the White Helmets Initiative and with the specific mandate to the Permanent Council of the Organization to strengthen the regional mechanism related to Disaster Risk Reduction and adapt all to the Hyogo Framework of Action. Various members of the Support Group made it possible. This is an example that demonstrates the projection of the ISDR Support Group policies, which may have been designed in Geneva, but the impact of its decisions affected the whole world.

9. Climate change has been one of the key topics globally analyzed over the last year. The ISDR Support Group has contributed with relevant elements to increase the synergy between reducing disaster risk and adapting to a changing climate, and brought this to the attention of our own colleagues in the climate change arena. This is not an easy task and we need to strengthen our efforts in this regard.

10. During and around the General Assembly 2007, leading up to COP-14 in Poznan, climate change and disaster risk reduction was discussed several times. This topic is becoming even more important for the 64th session of the General Assembly in 2009. It seems that the Secretary-General is convening a high-level meeting on climate change and disaster risk reduction. This reflects the Secretary-General's engagement in the topic. We, as the ISDR Support Group, can play an important role to engage our climate change colleagues to take this subject clearly into account in the new climate change agreement which hopefully will be agreed upon in Copenhagen at COP-15.

11. As UNISDR reported during our meetings, the UN family has also increased its commitment to support the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for action and disaster risk reduction as part of the core activities of the UN. The appointment of a new Assistant Secretary-General on Disaster Risk Reduction and Special Representative for the Implementation of the Hyogo Framework, Margareta Wahlström, was also an achievement that the ISDR Support Group did a great deal to support happening. We are proud of this achievement.

12. In conclusion: The current climate change scenario and negotiation is bringing an unprecedented opportunity for the ISDR Support Group, UNISDR and ISDR system of partnerships to advance in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action as a

powerful tool for adaptation. The ISDR Support Group has aimed to increase advocacy and understanding of the linkage while supporting the Secretariat's endeavor to provide guidance tools and to strengthen the ISDR system capacities. This is an area we should pursue strongly.

13. However, financing for disaster risk reduction within our own budgetary instruments as well as UNISDR's total dependency on voluntary contributions, remains challenging. At the international level, it is essential to make resources available for disaster risk reduction. We discussed the possibility of integrating disaster risk reduction into funding mechanisms for humanitarian or development assistance, energy, environment and climate change.

14. In fact, several specific initiatives by some of the Members were examined such as an allocation of a specific percentage of humanitarian funding for disaster reduction. The adaptation funds already in place or in discussion are other sources where we should actively focus on risk reduction as windows of financing. This remains another key challenge the ISDR Support Group might be actively looking into.

15. At the end of this II Session, Jakob Hallgren from Sweden will take over as the new Chair of the Support Group. I have no doubt that he will do a terrific job. I wish you all of the best. I would like to thank all of the Member States, for your support, your tolerance and your understanding, and ask you to please forgive any errors on my part. I would like to express my special recognition to the people of the Secretariat who were also very supportive and cooperative with me along these years, the Secretariat of the ISDR has some really brilliant staff.

16. It is true that there are many projects to finalize, many issues to resolve and many matters to conclude, but these past two years should be seen by the generations to come as the beginning of a long process in its very embryonic stage whilst we were learning, and moving forward while perhaps still committing some mistakes.

17. I am really convinced that our task should be aimed at creating the conditions for Poverty Risk Reduction, through Disaster Risk Reduction, in view of the fact that disaster affects the Poor more dramatically hence producing more and more poverty in this world. This should be, in my personal view, the first predicate of the Global Session. We should be conscious that what we do or do not do here, inevitably affects other parts of the globe. No man or woman is an island. We should also be conscious that what we do or do not do now, will inevitably affect the generations to come. Unless we really do not care about others or about our own children, we should do as much as we can, right here and right now.

Thank you.