

Official Written Statement

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
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(Please note this written statement is longer than the verbal statement as we only have 3 minutes for the verbal statement)

The Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement is dedicated to increasing community safety and resilience. Building on long-standing commitments to reduce disaster risk, in November 2007 the Movement together with 194 States party to the Geneva Conventions further declared under the slogan *Together for Humanity* their joint intention to reduce the humanitarian consequences of climate change. The integration of climate change adaptation into disaster risk reduction is now an urgent priority for us at all levels.

Continuous investment in DRR

The theme of this Second Session of the Global Platform, *Invest today for a safer tomorrow*, resonates strongly with the Red Cross Red Crescent's firm belief that continuous and sufficient investment in disaster risk reduction is the only way to improve the quality of life of vulnerable communities across the globe. This basic premise is a strong driver in the current process to formulate the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' Strategy 2020.

It is now well recognised that disasters cause more than just immediate human suffering, impacting not only lives but also livelihoods, ultimately rendering development unsustainable. Amplifying this challenge are increasing pressures and risks due to climate change, urbanisation, migration and other global, regional and local dynamics.

The International Federation has been experiencing increased humanitarian demands from weather-related disasters, likely driven at least in part by climate change. We must all adapt to these changing realities. The International Federation is taking a proactive approach, integrating climate information on all time-scales into our disaster reduction and humanitarian work, planning for identified trends as well as rising uncertainties.

In light of the increase in disasters due to the effects of climate change, governments must also become more legally prepared for international disaster cooperation at the domestic level. In the absence of such preparation, international assistance can unintentionally undermine local relief efforts or become needlessly ensnared in bureaucracy. The International Disaster Response Laws, Rules and Principles programme (IDRL) Guidelines, adopted by the States party to the Geneva Conventions in 2007 and welcomed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2008, can help governments to avoid these pitfalls.

Better understanding on DRR

We must better understand the risks the world is facing, in particular those related to poverty and human development. Through participatory processes such as the International Federation's vulnerability and capacity assessment, as well as advocacy, education and awareness-raising, communities are being empowered to recognize their risks and decide how best to manage them.

This is being complemented with community-based early warning to help communities build local predictive capacity across all time-scales, particularly in the context of climate change. For early warning it is important to avoid over-emphasizing technology, focusing rather on the "last mile" to ensure the information reaches those at risk, and empowering communities to take informed early action after receiving early warning.

During and after disasters we aim to provide relief and follow-on recovery activities in a way that contributes towards reducing longer-term risk, through risk-informed humanitarian response.

Longer-term vulnerability reduction requires a sound understanding of the multiple factors contributing to risk, for example the three pillars of availability, access and utilization for food security. It is clear that to reduce underlying risk a cross-sectoral approach is needed, with the International Federation approaching situations of food insecurity with an integrated community-based disaster management, health, gender and organisational development strategy.

Engaging communities for effective DRR

Focusing on the most vulnerable, the International Federation last year developed *A Framework for Community Safety and Resilience*, which provides a common understanding and foundation for community-focused disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Mechanisms such as the Red Cross Red Crescent Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and African Food Security Initiative translate the *Framework* into constantly expanding activities on the ground.

Community safety and resilience lies at the heart of global disaster risk reduction. If we cannot support the lives and livelihoods of the most at-risk, those vulnerable communities that are often marginalised yet have great potential capacities and innovative ideas for managing their own risk, then we have failed to reach our objective. Further, gender considerations are still largely marginalised from the disaster risk reduction process, yet in order to ensure effective disaster management it is essential that the needs, rights and full participation of all women, girls, boys and men is safeguarded.

While much progress has been made at the global, regional and national levels in terms of generating disaster reduction commitment and changing attitudes, we observe from the ground that few resources are made available

for investments that tackle the root causes of vulnerability at the community level. Let us recognise and act upon the aspects of the Hyogo Framework of Action that need greater attention, particularly supporting implementation at the local level.

Community risk reduction requires national political commitment and space, as well as good governance. The voices and experiences of the most vulnerable must be heard and considered. To help facilitate this, the International Federation highlights the need to develop local coordination mechanisms and partnerships between all stakeholders, and offers to lead on developing local platforms for disaster risk reduction.

To address the underlying factors that are increasing disaster risk and worsening poverty, we need renewed and increased national and international commitment. The International Federation stands committed to provide leadership to a process that assists communities to understand, assess and advocate for reducing the risks that they face, together with local government and other local partners.

This year the International Federation Secretariat alone is programming at least CHF 70 million to enable communities in high risk areas to take action 24 hours per day, 7 days per week through community-based disaster preparedness. We encourage greater investment in disaster risk reduction and I challenge us all to set ourselves bold targets, such as allocating at least 20 per cent of emergency response resources for disaster risk reduction activities.

Investing today for a safer tomorrow requires long-term financial commitments that allow effective strengthening of livelihoods and food security, increasing the resilience of communities. We encourage disaster risk reduction financial commitments of at least 3-5 years to adequately reduce underlying risks and contribute to sustainable development.

The International Federation is committed to upscaling community-based disaster reduction and climate change adaptation in targeted high risk communities in at least 90 countries until 2015.