



Global Platform  
for Disaster Risk Reduction  
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**Name of Event: [Plenary] High Level Policy Panel: Responding to Natural Disasters - A Long Ignored Development Challenge?**

**Date of Event: May 10, 2011**

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**Panellists:**

- Mr. Tim Sebastian, Chairman of the Doha Debates and Former Presenter of BBC's HARD Talk (Moderator)
- Ms. Sri Mulyani Indrawati, Managing Director, World Bank
- Ms. Asha-Rose Mijiro, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations
- Ms. Kristalina Georgieva, European Union Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response
- Mr. Ludger Arnoldussen, Member of Board, Munich RE
- Mr. Marcus Oxley, Chairman, Global Network of Civil Society Organizations for Disaster Risk Reduction
- Lt. General Nadeem Ahmad, Former Deputy-Chairman, Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority, Pakistan
- Mr. Ato Mitiku Kassa, State Minister for Disaster Management and Food Security Sector, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ethiopia

**1) Outline**

The three key questions addressed during this session were:

- "Have we learned the lessons of the past?"
- "What you're promised and what you get: How to ensure communities get what they deserve"
- "Prevention pays...but why are we not investing?"

**2) Key messages, outcomes, recommendations**

- *We need to better address the underlying causes/drivers of risk*

Panelists pointed out that the occurrence of a natural disaster provides a unique window of opportunity to break from the past and to "build back better". However, according to one of the panelists, the real opportunity to build back better resides in addressing the underlying causes/drivers of risk. In this context, after a natural disaster

it is recommended to conduct – in addition to a post disaster damage and loss assessment – a post mortem examination/critical learning review of what went wrong. As national governments have the primary responsibility for the recovery of their country, they are considered to be in an ideal position to take the lead on this examination.

- *Sharing knowledge on reconstruction experiences needs to further be improved*

It is pointed out that disasters provide unique insights into how countries deal with extreme situations. There is already a lot of knowledge in the system, but we need to find better ways to share the knowledge. Panelists mentioned the transfer of South-South knowledge, but also the importance of sharing knowledge between developed countries.

- *The policy needs to be better connected with the local reality*

In order to fix the gap between policies and the realities on the ground, the priorities, needs and concerns of the primary stakeholders of the post disaster reconstruction process need to be included in the policy discourse. Participation, inclusion and accountability are required to translate policy into practice. Finally, it is important that there is strong state and non-state capacity at the local level to implement the policies.

- *Strong institutions need to be in place to lead the reconstruction agenda*

Panelists emphasized the need for strong government institutions which are able to take the lead on the disaster agenda, both ex-ante and post disaster. In the case of post-disaster reconstruction, strong institutional arrangements need to be in place to coordinate the reconstruction efforts. In countries where the needed institutional arrangements are not in place, the international community should take the lead. At the same time, it is pointed out it is important to avoid to create parallel structures.

- *The importance of coordination needs to be recognized*

In terms of coordination, panelists pointed out that during the reconstruction process various internal and external actors have to work together – ranging from financial institutions, national governments to civil society groups. In this context, it was argued that the roles of the various actors need to be clearly defined and the division of labor needs to be respected by all involved actors.

- *Reconstruction should be viewed as a long-term process*

In the case of mega disasters, panelists argued that national governments need to organize for a long-term reconstruction. It was suggested that donors need to organize to provide predictable funding for a long period (time horizon can be 10-20 years). In this context, it was emphasized that the funding needs to come with strong accountability mechanisms to ensure progress.

- *What next?*

Panelists suggested this is the time to establish a new (technical) global framework which guides the involvement of the donors, international humanitarian agencies and national governments in designing and implementing long-term sustainable recovery programs.

There is a wealth of experience in reconstruction, one of the panelists recommended to create a core group of experts based in the regions to provide assistance to countries when a disaster strikes. The assistance can range from relief efforts to planning and reconstruction.

Another panelist argued that it is important to look into risk transfer options. In many countries the percentage of insured assets is low and that the insurance industry does not see enough demand from government institutions to cover assets. The panelist emphasized the need to increase awareness of risk insurance. Furthermore, it is suggested to establish an audit or rating agency on the international level to measure the risks of countries and their performance vis-à-vis these risks.

It is suggested to create a transparent and impartial monitoring system to review the financial inputs at the national level and to measure the outputs at the local level. This needs to be a joint action of all the different levels – international, regional, national and local.