

**Name of Event: [Plenary] Invest Today for a Safer Tomorrow – Increase Investment in Local Action**

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

**Panellists:**

- H.E. Mr. BAN Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General
- Ms. Asha-Rose Mijiro, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations (Chair)
- Ms. Zeinab Badawi, International BBC Journalist and Broadcaster (Moderator)
- Ms. Prema Gopalan, Executive Director, Swayam Shikshan Prayog, India
- Mr. Marcelo Luis Ebrard Casaubón, Mayor of Mexico City, Mexico
- Mr. John Carter, Member of Parliament, Minister for Civil Defence, New Zealand
- Mr. Luo Pingfei, Vice Minister, Ministry of Civil Affairs, China
- Mr. Abdou Sane, Member of Parliament, National Assembly, Senegal
- Mr. Robert Glasser, Secretary General, CARE International
- Mr. Lawrence Temfwe, Executive Director, Jubilee Centre, Zambia
- Ms. Sandra Wu, President and CEO, Kokusai Kogyo, Japan

**1) Outline**

Risk is most effectively reduced at the local level. Concerted action is required to ensure that systematic and predictable resources are reaching local levels, that activities are well-designed and that capacities are in place to support implementation. This plenary session introduces the overarching theme of the Third Session of the Global Platform, and provides an opportunity for leaders to describe the strengths and weaknesses of mechanisms designed to ensure that local authorities are better resourced financially and technically. The plenary speakers are invited to recommend specific steps that can be taken to align national and local priorities in building resilience. Finally, this plenary considers how local and national

authorities get started on assessing risk, and seeks, as a concrete outcome, to generate commitment to assess school and hospital safety.

## 2) Key messages, outcomes, recommendations

- This session was opened by the Moderator, Ms. **Zeinab Badawi**, who addressed a question to UN Secretary-General Mr. **BAN Ki-moon** on the issue of action at the local level, particularly in relation to any urgent tasks to be addressed, and the involvement of the government as well as the private sector. UN Secretary-General Mr. BAN Ki-moon responded by stressing the need for risk assessment of infrastructures such as hospitals and schools. Specific targets in raising awareness of disaster risk reduction need to be addressed. Strengthened awareness among political leaders should be a priority; in order to broaden actions, the leadership of local governments is vital.
- The moderator invited Ms. **Prema Gopalan**, Executive Director of Swayam Shikshan Prayog, India, to speak about her views on action at a local level, in particular with regard to her own country, India. Through her work with over 100 communities, Ms. Gopalan has noted that people have the capacity and resilience to deal with disasters. More than 50 million women are involved in self-help groups in India. Local, grassroots communities should be made aware of risks in order to act effectively.
- Mr. **Marcelo Luis Ebrard Casaubón**, Mayor of Mexico City, spoke about the importance of community action to prevent and prepare for disasters. It is important that local governments are heard.
- Mr. **John Carter**, Member of Parliament of Minister for Civil Defense, New Zealand, was then invited to speak about the situation in his own country, when two earthquakes hit Christchurch, in September 2010 and again in February 2011. He conveyed the national and international response, and the important link between response and recovery in disaster situations. The role of the Civil Defense structure in New Zealand was important because it educates and trains individuals to deal with emergency situations.
- Mr. **Luo Pingfei**, Vice Minister of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, China, highlighted the importance of raising public awareness and coordinating between central and local government to implement effective measures at the local level.

- Mr. **Abdou Sane**, Member of Parliament of National Assembly of Senegal, also spoke about the importance of raising awareness through education, and establishing a risk prevention culture. With an integrated and concentrated approach, local authorities can reach their objectives.
- Mr. **Robert Glasser**, Secretary General, CARE International, raised the issue of the challenge faced when the only option is local action. In that case, greater interaction is needed between government policy and civil society.
- The situation in Zambia was then introduced by Mr. **Lawrence Temfwe**, Executive Director, Jubilee Centre, Zambia. Local people are involved in risk reduction and disaster management, but they were also listened to. However, difficulties arise when communities do not own their lands and where infrastructure is lacking. On the other hand, through effective cooperation between local government, civil society and communities, such potential disasters as a cholera outbreak have been mitigated.
- Ms. **Sandra Wu**, President and CEO of Kokusai Kogyo, Japan, spoke about the need to involve the private sector and to empower local government in disaster prevention and disaster risk reduction.
- When asked by Ms. **Badawi** to provide comments on the priorities for local action in disaster risk management, Mr. **Glasser** pointed out that listening to the voices of the people and empowering women and girls were the key to successful disaster management. Mr. **Ebrard Casaubón** requested more investment in this area, and more support for local authorities. Lessons learned need to be shared, for example by supporting United Nations initiatives. Ms. **Wu** noted that disaster risk reduction can fail if not implemented at an individual level. Education in this area is essential, and we can benefit from private sector skills and expertise.

### 3) Conclusions

- Finally, Mr. **Carter** concluded that the biggest gift we can give to humanity is saving lives. By educating and preparing people for disasters, they become aware of their responsibilities.



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