



The Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction Sendai, 14-18 March 2015

Statement by FINLAND, Mr Pekka Puustinen, Director General of the Department for Development Policy, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

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Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Finland acknowledges the success of the Hyogo Framework for Action in reducing disaster risks over the past ten (10) years and the role of the UNISDR secretariat in coordinating the work.

Despite of the progress made in reducing disaster risk, continued efforts are needed to recognize that disaster risk reduction is primarily a development issue. We should be much smarter in reducing negative impact of disasters by investing in prevention and preparedness.

The mutually reinforcing role of the three major processes in 2015 – disaster risk reduction, sustainable development and climate change cannot be overemphasised. All these three processes are tackling underlying risk factors, the social, economic, political and environmental issues that put people at risk and impede development. Furthermore, we have to ensure a strong linkage between all these processes and the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016.

Every aspect of sustainable development (social, economic or environmental) can be undermined by disasters. Disaster risk reduction must be integrated in all development policies, national development strategies, governance structures and relevant legislations with multi-hazard, multi-sectoral and comprehensive approach.

Policy commitments, which in many cases has co-benefits with other development aims, need to be coupled with adequate national financial commitment. Disaster risk must be addressed in public policies, relevant legislations and regulations and provide incentives and opportunities for actions.

Both disaster risk reduction and climate proofing are cross-cutting objectives of the Finnish Development Policy. They are mutually supportive, and taking them on-board already in the planning phase of each development cooperation project ascertains, as their part, the long term sustainability of the results.

The role of ecosystem based approaches – such as maintaining forest cover and natural habitats such as mangroves and coral reefs at coastal areas – is of high importance for reducing disaster risks. More emphasis should be given to reducing disasters through sustainable management of ecosystems and related capacity building.

The development and implementation of safe school and hospital policies and programmes is as a priority for action in order to protect and guarantee uninterrupted access to education and health services.

Development planning must be smart and ensure sustainability of investments during disasters. Every effort has to be made to ensure that all new critical infrastructures are disaster resilient. Private sector plays an important role here. We should aim at innovative solutions, leading to win-win-situations.

If, however, disaster reduction fails and humanitarian response is needed, the response must be risk-informed and contribute to the future resilience.

More attention should be given to the fact that different contexts require different DRR approaches. Concrete measures are needed to reduce disaster risk also in complex contexts and to assist fragile and conflict-affected states to invest in DRR as part of long-term stability and national security.

Finland considers the improvement of governance for disaster risk management as critical to future success. Greater transparency and accountability among public authorities, media, private sector, and civil society at all levels and across sectors are needed to ensure proper management and reduction of disaster and climate related risks. Effective coordination mechanisms and partnerships need to be developed between public authorities and relevant stakeholders.

Local people are the first responders and know their own needs best. Action at local level must empower the affected and at-risk communities, and in particular the women. The rights, needs and capacities of children, women, elderly, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups should be taken better into account in the implementation of the new framework.

Finland appreciates the role of National and Regional Platforms on disaster risk reduction as effective coordination mechanisms that bring governments and different stakeholders together at national level. Finland warmly recommends that all countries engage in voluntary peer reviews. Based on our own experience, they can help to improve policy making, increase accountability and mutual learning.

In Finland, the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction is led by the Ministry of the Interior and involves 16 governmental and other key organisations. The Platform has proven its value in increased cooperation and sharing of knowledge. The Finnish national platform aims at developing a disaster risk reduction system that consists of prevention, preparedness, early warning arrangements, effective response and recovery by using right mixture of legal, technological and informative means. The goal is to raise the public awareness and involve everyone in making the society more resilient.

Provision of user-friendly hydro-meteorological data timely and having mechanisms in place to take action can save lives. Finland's National Meteorological service is a strong provider of real time incidence monitoring, warnings and analytical information on disasters to decision-makers and rescue authorities. We consider it of crucial importance that this data, as well as the collection and sharing of data on disaster losses, hazards, and vulnerabilities, are easily accessible and shared in a transparent and open manner.

It is also crucial that all participating authorities and stakeholders can get timely information and that they are able to communicate with each other. In addition to the 24/7 National Early Warning Centre that was established at the Finnish Meteorological Institute, this has been made possible by combined emergency response centre system and authority radio network which ensure that all authorities get the alarm information at the same time and they can communicate with each other using the common radio system.

The Finnish Meteorological Institute and the Foreign Ministry continue to invest into global early warning and weather, climate and water-related partnerships. With the support already provided to over hundred (100) countries to strengthen the early warning capacities of the national meteorological and hydrological services, Finland is one of the major donors in the field of meteorology.

Finally, Finland trusts that with local, national, regional and international collective commitments and the concerted, well-coordinated efforts to implement the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction the future vulnerability to disasters will be significantly reduced.

Thank you.