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May 12, 2011

**Statement by Mr. Jorma Julin, Director General for Development Policy in the Third Session of**

**the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction**

Madame Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates,

Finland fully aligns itself with the Statement by the European Union. In addition, we would like to take up a few issues from the national point of view, namely the link between disasters and climate change, progress made in Disaster Risk Reduction in Finland’s development policy and cooperation, Finland’s National Platform for Action and the role of the UN in taking the DRR agenda forward.

Climate change has become an integral part of Finland’s development policy. Disaster Risk Reduction is closely linked with the climate change agenda. In order to effectively tackle the challenges and to prevent the negative impact of climate change we need a comprehensive approach and making of progress at several levels simultaneously. In the long-term, building of resilience to avoid vulnerabilities is a key issue. Finland welcomes the UN system’s role in this respect. In the mid-term, focus should be on adaptation. In the short-term, there is a need to react to emerging disasters without any delay. In this context, Finland stresses the importance of Disaster Risk Reduction and Preparedness.

Madame Chairperson,

The new Government of Finland will be appointed shortly, following the Parliamentary elections in April. All efforts will be made to ensure that the in-coming Government’s White Paper on Development Policy will have a stronger focus on Disaster Risk Reduction. Finland considers DRR mainly as a development issue although some emergency preparedness elements can be included in humanitarian assistance. Consequently, DRR will be mainstreamed into development co-operation and become an indicator of aid quality. It is important to recognize, however, that DRR is not a new issue for Finland or in development debates.

 Finland has wide knowledge on meteorology and early warning systems as well as on water, agriculture and forest sectors. Investment in the development of hydro-meteorological capacity plays a key role in the reduction of weather related losses. For decades Finland has addressed this issue in development cooperation projects. Currently, Finland supports a number of projects in more than 30 countries. They aim at strengthening the capacity of national Meteorological Institutes in combating natural disasters. Finnish companies continue to offer this know-how to partners in developing countries.

Madame Chairperson,

Effective Disaster Risk Reduction requires a strategic approach supported by systematic implementation. It should include prevention, early warning and effective response by using legislative, technological, financial and educational means. Those should be related to the whole system in a manageable way instead of some independent initiatives alone. Disaster Risk Reduction can only be effective if it is a task and responsibility of everybody at all levels, including the private sector and NGOs. Risk analysis should be the basis of the system with best possible cost benefit value in terms of investments.

Participation of women in climate and DRR activities is a prerequisite for effective action. Gender considerations must be properly integrated into national climate and DRR strategies and related development programmes. Finland also emphasizes the importance of building long term social protection systems and safety nets to reduce the impact of disasters on the most vulnerable populations.

Madame Chairperson,

Finland’s National Platform for the Hyogo Framework was established under the leadership of the Ministry of Interior as recently as in May last year. It has already demonstrated its added value. We encourage those countries that do not have a Platform yet, to establish one. The Platform lays the foundation for effective networking and identification of possible gaps, aiming at developing further the existing national prevention and preparedness systems. 13 organizations representing the Prime Minister’s Office and other ministries, government agencies and research institutions as well as NGOs are participating in the Platform. Finland’s National DRR Action Plan will be ready within the next few weeks. The Action Plan includes mainly national level activities. It is worth mentioning, however, that development policy is dealt with in a horizontal manner, as it concerns all national actors who participate in development co-operation.

The new National Early Warning System for Natural Disasters is based on an expert network of hydrologists, meteorologists and seismologists. It works on 24/7 basis. The system includes also a functional monitoring, communication and dissemination system ensuring that early warnings are received by end-users. In addition, the system provides the decision-makers, managers and rescue authorities with analytical information. The system has already proven to be very effective, for instance during the Japan earthquake and tsunami in March 2011.

The National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy was launched in 2005. Management of risks is one of the key objectives of the Strategy. Finland’s Climate Change Adaptation Research Programme supports the implementation of the Adaptation Strategy. It will produce information that will facilitate the planning of practical adaptation measures. Research has already produced estimates of changes in the frequency and intensity of adverse weather, climate and hydrological events. In addition, studies on impacts of climate change and key vulnerabilities have provided basis for directing actions on, for example, management of water resources and invasive species.

Madame Chairperson,

Natural disasters pose a significant threat to development and poverty reduction efforts and jeopardise the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. This issue needs to be tackled in a comprehensive manner, linking relief with development. The UN country teams play a key role in this effort. The international community should focus on prevention of disasters and preparedness, with an aim of reducing the need for humanitarian assistance. Full implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action is a key in this effort, under the leadership of the Secretary-General’s Special Representative and the ISDR Secretariat. A more strategic and focused approach would, however, support the ISDR system to become more effective. We – the Member States of the UN - would also need to have another look at the DRR architecture and maybe bring the ISDR Secretariat closer to the UN development structures. It is also important to have a much better understanding of DRR related investments as a basis for well informed further actions. Finland organised together with the ISDR Secretariat in April an Expert Workshop on Tracking of DRR investments. This was aimed as an input to our deliberations during the course of this week.

Thank you Madame Chairperson.

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