

# Official written statement, Dr Matthias Schmale, Undersecretary General, on behalf of Mr Bekele Geleta, Secretary General

Third Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction / Geneva / 10 May 2011

*(Please find the three-minute verbal statement attached at the end)*

## Investing in local action

The theme of this Third Session of the Global Platform, *Invest today for a Safer Tomorrow* — *Increased Investment in Local Action*, highlights what the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) considers key to achieving significant progress in reducing vulnerability and disaster risk. Local action and working at scale with the often forgotten high-risk people and communities is the real test for the disaster risk reduction community.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are aligned and responsive to local needs. At the same time they serve a unique – what we call auxiliary – role with their national governments, and are part of a global network. As Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers live in the communities they serve, they are well placed to ensure that community groups are involved and vulnerable people are brought into meaningful dialogue and planning with public authorities at all levels.

The Third Global Platform began on 8 May, World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day. Volunteers play a crucial role during times of disaster and in contributing to achieving the global development agenda. Volunteers make a vital contribution towards disaster risk reduction, public awareness and education, early warning, early action, and as drivers of local resilience.

In 2010 alone, 25 million of the world's most vulnerable people benefitted from Red Cross Red Crescent programme services.

## Strategy 2020

In November 2009, the IFRC adopted its Strategy 2020, which provides guidance for all Red Cross Red Crescent programmes, services and actions.

Our National Societies focus on saving lives, protecting livelihoods, and strengthening recovery from disasters and crises. This means effective preparedness and appropriate and timely response to disasters; reduced deaths, losses and damage, and improved restoration of community functioning after disasters and crises. Our humanitarian action is risk-informed and continues to contribute towards reducing longer-term risk reduction. It takes gender into consideration as women and men can be exposed to different types of risks and their coping methods are often different.

Reliable early warning systems are instrumental in saving lives and protecting assets and livelihoods. The implementation of technologies such as the large-scale use of mobile text messaging and solutions for forecasting, projection and prediction improve early action and information management in disasters. Relevant disaster and crisis related information must be simplified and made accessible in a timely manner to individuals and communities at risk to enable them to take action. The linkages to climate information providers must be utilised effectively to better integrate climate information into disaster reduction work.

In all humanitarian actions, there must be knowledge and understanding of locally prevalent hazards. Also, environmentally sustainable living must be increased, and communities must be empowered to devise their own ways to manage hazards and reduce their own exposure and vulnerability.

Resilient communities are able to adapt to, withstand and recover from external and internal shocks that make them vulnerable. Community members must be able to be aware of their own risks, vulnerabilities and capacities and be able to act on these; have equitable access to social services and basic infrastructure, such as health and education;

meet their everyday basic needs on food, water, sanitation and shelter; practice safe and diverse sources of livelihood; have adequate coping strategies in times of stress; and be secure, free from conflict and fear.

Vulnerable people must be given the space to take responsibility for reducing their own risks and in influencing decision-making and planning in disaster management.

### **Call for collaboration**

Disaster risks are both a humanitarian and developmental concern. The IFRC encourages an increased and improved collaboration between humanitarian and development practitioners for the benefit of safer, healthier and more resilient communities. The collaboration during recovery and rehabilitation phases strengthens the basis for longer term disaster reduction work. Effective collaboration must be the name of the game from municipal to national levels between governments and all stakeholders to achieve at least minimum safety and resilience standards.

### **Learning and mainstreaming disaster risk reduction**

We have learnt through numerous studies and evaluations – for instance on the 2004 tsunami - how to better mainstream disaster risk reduction into emergency response operations and recovery. Our 186 National Societies are working hard to embed disaster risk reduction in all their programmes and interventions, including disaster response, food security, health and care, water and sanitation, organizational development and shelter.

### **Legal preparedness**

The importance of legislation for the successful implementation of disaster risk reduction strategies is increasingly recognised. National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies call on their respective governments, in their disaster risk management laws, to strengthen the roles of high at risk individuals and communities and community-based organizations such as the Red Cross Red Crescent.

In November, the IFRC will present a collection of best practices to the 31<sup>st</sup> International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent as well as a non-binding checklist of legislative actions to enhance disaster risk reduction at the community level.

Legal preparedness for disasters can reduce their impact. However, few governments have adequate systems in place to facilitate and regulate outside relief. In 2007, the 30<sup>th</sup> International Conference adopted the Guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance (IDRL Guidelines) on how states can best prepare their laws and procedures to prevent common regulatory problems. We have since supported National Societies and governments in the implementation of the guidelines.

### **Hyogo Framework for Action mid-term review**

As an active member of the ISDR system, IFRC contributed to the mid-term review by conducting its own review of the Hyogo Framework for Action. The IFRC account showed that Hyogo Framework had provided strong guidance at the global, regional and national levels for developing policies and strategies. The most important achievements had been the agreement of common policy frameworks, raising the profile of disaster risk reduction, increased awareness and knowledge, and more effective disaster preparedness.

Our review recommends for the remaining five years that coordination and planning at all levels must be strengthened and must follow common priorities and targets. There is need to provide practical support for disaster risk reduction for vulnerable people, including financing mechanisms that pool and guarantee long-term disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation resources. Governments should contribute to enabling environments in terms of national budget allocation for local level risk reduction work.

Practitioners' culture should shift away from focusing on outputs to achieving demonstrable outcomes and impacts. A more proactive and participatory approach for sharing information, experiences and expertise should be supported. Finally, we need a

larger pool of knowledgeable people with stronger professional skills across the disaster risk reduction and development spectra.

### **Strengthening programming and accountability**

Since the mid-1970s, the Red Cross Red Crescent has invested in community-based preparedness and early warning systems. A disaster preparedness policy was adopted in 1999. Our flagship World Disasters Report focused on reducing risk in 2002, followed by a World Disasters Report on community resilience in 2004. In 2008, the Red Cross Red Crescent developed its community safety and resilience framework following a wide internal and external consultation. The framework guides National Societies to address vulnerabilities and risks in their community-driven interventions.

Together with increased investments, the IFRC has developed a performance framework for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. It helps National Societies to translate longer-term national disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation strategies into a logical planning framework and better reporting, monitoring and impact measurement through selection of focused indicators.

The IFRC has conducted its annual mapping on global disaster risk reduction action expenditure. Compared to 2009, 2010 saw an overall increase of 30 per cent in expenditure in about 90 countries, reaching at least 17 million people. The largest part of the funding was targeted to community-based disaster risk reduction and National Society disaster preparedness. The third largest share was for climate change adaptation activities.

In recent decades there has been growing recognition that prevention is better than cure for effective disaster management. Accessing sufficient resources for disaster prevention and risk reduction work has however continued to be a challenge. To better understand

the economic efficiency of community-based disaster risk reduction, the IFRC implemented three cost-benefit analyses in Nepal, the Philippines and Sudan. The results showed clearly that community-based disaster risk reduction can be economically efficient and financially worthwhile as long as it is properly designed and implemented.

We are looking at developing new funding instruments such as a community safety and resilience trust fund, which would allow seed funding for innovative new proposals as well as predictable longer-term funding.

### **The way forward**

Statements of intent at the end of the day will not give us lasting credibility with the people who need our support. We must all hold each other fully accountable for acting upon the commitments we shall be making during this Third Global Platform.

The IFRC is committed to scaling up risk reduction and climate change adaptation in high risk communities, and is considering the formal allocation of at least 10 per cent of funds from international disaster response appeals to disaster risk reduction.

IFRC 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.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## **Official statement, Dr Matthias Schmale, Undersecretary General, on behalf of Mr Bekele Geleta, Secretary General**

Third Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction / Geneva / 10 May 2011

### **Excellencies,**

This session's theme highlights what the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies considers key to achieving significant progress in reducing vulnerability and disaster risk. Local action and working at scale with high-risk people and communities is the real test for the disaster risk reduction community.

The global Red Cross Red Crescent network is making a daily difference in the lives of vulnerable people and communities through disaster preparedness, response and risk reduction activities. In particular, they play a key role in public awareness and education, providing early warning and taking early action, and empowering communities to become more resilient.

The IFRC's Strategy 2020 guides our 186 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in saving lives, protecting livelihoods, strengthening recovery and enabling healthy and safe living. This requires effective preparedness, timely response to disasters and improved recovery, and can only be achieved with local knowledge and understanding. Environmentally sustainable living must be increased, and communities empowered to devise their own ways to manage hazards and reduce their own exposure and vulnerability.

Disaster risks are both a humanitarian and developmental concern. The humanitarian community has worked hard to reduce disaster and health risks in recent emergency

operations and to build a stronger basis for longer-term disaster reduction in recovery and rehabilitation phases. Effective collaboration between humanitarian and developmental organizations is crucial in mainstreaming risk reduction into sustainable development work in health, water and sanitation and food security, and must take place at local, national and global levels if minimum safety and resilience standards are to be achieved.

Red Cross Red Crescent societies call on their governments to strengthen the role of at-risk people and communities, and community-based organizations, in disaster risk management laws. Vulnerable people must be given the space to reduce their own risks and to influence decision-making and disaster management planning.

### **Excellencies,**

This world is changing rapidly. There is a notable increase in the number and complexity of disasters worldwide, and we must also come to terms with the often dramatic consequences of migration, urbanization, economic and political turmoil, and the increase in non-communicable diseases. The IFRC commits to increasing support to high-risk communities and providing leadership in local action, together with local government and other key partners.

Statements of intent alone will not give us lasting credibility with people who need our support. The IFRC is fully committed to play its part in risk reduction, but we must all hold each other fully accountable for acting upon the commitments we make during this Global Platform.