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Official Statement by the Swiss NGO DRR Platform
Presented by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation (Nicole Clot) and Caritas
Switzerland (Nicole Stolz)

Distinguished Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege for the Swiss NGO DRR Platform to participate at the 4th Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and to have the opportunity to deliver an official statement. We would like to thank UNISDR and Switzerland as a host for this opportunity.

The Swiss NGO DRR Platform is a network of Swiss-based non-governmental organizations dedicated to help people and organizations to prepare for and adapt to climatic trends and shocks, to more effectively mitigate risks and to enhance risk prevention in the humanitarian and development sectors. The Platform was founded in 2011 consisting today of the following partners: Swiss Red Cross, Caritas, HELVETAS Swiss

Intercooperation (the latter three forming the core group of the Platform), Medair, Swiss Solidar, HEKS, Terre des homes, ProAct Network, Global Risk Forum Davos, World Vision, and Tearfund.

By promoting DRR through outreach into communities, the NGOs ensure the important link from policies to practical and measurable results on the ground. These results in turn feed back into stronger policies and better aligned strategies.

Recognizing this fact, the Swiss NGO DRR Platform conducted a peer review in three countries, Ethiopia, Haiti, Vietnam in order to better understand challenges and good practices at the ground and to feed in these experiences into the ongoing discussion around the current HFA and a future HFA2.

The following recommendations presented now are aiming for better impact of HFA at the community level:

Recommendation Action line 1:

Ensure that funding reaches governments from national to local level and that self-organisation of communities is supported, especially in fragile contexts where state institutions fail to provide basic services.

Recommendations Action line 2:

Provide support to and consider indigenous and local monitoring on climate change. Ensure that knowledge is generated and disseminated at the local level, where it is needed most.

Recommendation Action line 3:

Ensure that climate change and disaster information is systematically integrated into school curricula and vocational training in order to raise

awareness and enhance a sense of ownership and responsibility. Disseminate local actions and good practices to motivate change.

Recommendation Action line 4:

In each area of activity, identify and name the most important risk drivers, focus on those having most leverage and tackle the underlying power relations.

Recommendation Action line 5:

Ensure that communities and local institutions are not only strengthened before a disaster hits, but also take over a leading role in the co-ordination of disaster management.

Related to HFA2 and Sustainable Development Goals:

The Swiss NGO DRR community recommends that disaster risk reduction is mainstreamed in all policy frameworks and agreements renewed up to 2015 and fully integrated into institutional and sector practices to help save lives, protect livelihoods and reduce economic losses. Failure to do so could undermine progress and squander investments, since safety and security are one basic requirement for any kind of sustainable development.

Integrating DRR within these frameworks will require, in our views, to have clear targets, a stronger evidence base, greater political commitment and new efforts across policy areas – from health and education to economic and fiscal planning.

For the HFA2, the Swiss NGO DRR Platform promotes and recommends to:

Bring the Different Communities Together

Within the DRR NGO community there is a strong consensus to promote a more integrated approach, i.e. to bring the different communities of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction together and integrate these domains to ultimately strengthen the resilience of families, communities and nations.

Focus More on Community Resilience

Disasters concern everyone, but affect the vulnerable most. Taking this into account, the post-HFA framework needs to put women, men and children at the centre of attention and action, with a special focus on strengthening the resilience of people living in informal settlements and those communities in fragile and conflict-affected situations. To be more effective, the post-HFA framework needs to find ways how to more closely cooperate with civil society and their representatives to address the major shortcomings of the current system.

Set Clear Targets and Measurable Indicators

Thus far, implementation of the HFA could not reduce losses and people are increasingly being exposed to more frequent disasters. This trend cannot be reversed without further commitments. A HFA2 has therefore to guide and trigger effective implementation, using clear targets and measurable indicators that are able to integrate data from informal settlements while also being sensitive to small-scale disasters. Self-reporting has to be complemented by external monitoring of civil society organisations.

Identify Risk Drivers and Connect them with Power Relations

Knowing the risk – by assessing hazards and vulnerabilities – allows for more active risk management but may not be good enough to tackle the

underlying causes for ever increasing risks. Identifying risk drivers and connecting them with power relations, for example in unplanned urbanisation or degraded ecosystems by power holders contributes to further marginalisation and exposure of vulnerable households.

New Financing Mechanisms

New financing mechanisms need to be developed in order to increase impact and action. Among others, compensation mechanisms need to be put in place that reward sustainable natural resource management and stop the externalisation of costs by increasing risks through the redistribution of benefits from ecosystem services. Examples include deforestation for agricultural purpose or the destruction of mangroves to create shrimp ponds.

Distinguished Chairman, distinguished delegates,
Looking forward, we want to emphasize the commitment of the Swiss NGO DRR Platform at the international level. One particular commitment of the Swiss NGO DRR Platform for 2013 and 2014 with support from the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier de Schutter, is to develop an international ranking system allowing to rank countries on the basis of the quality of strategies they have in place to address disasters and their outcomes. The human right-based approach is the starting point for elaborating such a system. We are convinced that more targeted, efficient indicators are necessary to create incentives and trigger more commitment on the ground.

Let me conclude by expressing again our gratitude of having giving the opportunity to share our commitment during this 4th Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.