

Statement of the State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, H.E. Mr. Peter Burian at the 3rd United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, Sendai, Japan, March 14, 2015

Slovakia fully aligns itself with statement on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

I would like **to thank Japan** for organizing the 3rd United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. My gratitude is expressed also to the **UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction** (UNISDR), whose efforts were indeed indispensable.

This timely Conference takes place in Sendai, close to Fukushima, which was 4 years ago struck by a major earthquake and tsunami. In that destruction tens of thousands of people perished. Since the tragedy, we have seen unprecedented efforts of Japan and its citizens in terms of rebuilding society. Now the world can see that Japanese economy and society were not only rebuilt, but also became more resilient against future disasters. This is the example to all other countries, how to deal with disasters, if they occur. For those reasons, the decision to hold the 3rd UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai is very much appropriate. Slovakia appreciates leadership of Japan in preparation of this Conference as well as its excellent organizational setup.

A lot of hard work was done during the last 10 years at the UN level in assisting countries in building resilience against disasters and strengthening their response. The most important pillar - the Hyogo Framework for Action - has been with us for one decade since 2005.

Slovakia appreciates the fact, that even if **the Hyogo document** would soon expire, it **has brought about important changes** and its essence **remains relevant**. It helped to reduce loss of life, social, economic, and environmental assets and strengthen the capacity to anticipate and recover from disasters. **Thanks to that, we have seen a strategic shift** from response-oriented towards prevention-oriented thinking.

Slovakia in particular highly values the fact, that disaster risk reduction was recognised at the UN level as an **effective tool** to achieve resilience and strengthen sustainable development. Resilience and vulnerability reduction are becoming an **integral part** of development and humanitarian aid. **This kind of integration of policies is very important for Slovakia as a relatively new donor.**

My delegation emphasizes, that disaster risk management should be implemented in partnership with all stakeholders, including civil society, private sector, international organizations within and outside the UN and financial institutions. Indeed in the last 10 years at the UN level and in the run-up to this Conference in particular, the Hyogo Framework has shown that building partnerships and improved coordination bears the fruit with streamlined activities, saved resources and tangible results.

While much has been achieved, we remain concerned about **increasing** human, economic and social impact of disasters and climate change. Disasters know no borders; they strike regardless of the size, level of development or geography. **Slovakia is no exception.**

Slovakia remains committed to prevention, risk management and vulnerability reduction as crucial components of human safety and sustainable development. **We have developed substantial experience** in disaster risk management and resilience building, domestically as well as towards our development and humanitarian partners.

Slovakia evaluates risks within the prevention of future threats and cooperates with EU partners and other countries on the elimination of exceptional events caused not only by natural disasters. These experiences were incorporated into the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) questionnaire, which Slovakia participated in.

In this context, Slovakia considers the subregional cooperation and especially partnership with neighbouring countries as particularly important to build an effective system of prevention and protection. Therefore, in terms of building an early warning system against natural hazards, such as floods, Slovakia has already built a successful cooperation with Ukraine, especially on flood-prone territories around borders of both countries. This early warning system encompasses more than 30.000 citizens in Slovakia and more than 330.000 citizens in Ukraine. In practical terms, this system works on the basis of 61 electronic sirens located in both countries. Besides sending an early warning to citizens, warning would be sent to state institutions and local offices involved in managing civil protection.

Regarding our national capabilities, after our experience with widespread floods – lately in 2013 - Slovakia aims at reducing damage caused by natural hazards such as torrential rain, floods and landslides, by creating more efficient system and prevention measures.

The effective protection of Slovakia contains an extensive set of measures carried out as prevention, at the time of a risk of flood, during the flood itself and afterwards. An investment in flood protection measures before the flood is three to four times cheaper in comparison to remediation after flood. In Slovakia, more than 559 critical points are identified in the flood protection. **This kind of prevention against floods was very useful in 2013**, when our capital Bratislava was in danger of being submerged by a massive flood. Anti-flood iron barriers were built also with a partial EU help.

Slovakia is ready to share experiences and best practices with partners on the issue of prevention and building early warning systems against natural and other kinds of hazards and/or disasters.

Mr. Chairman,

Today we stand before the task to agree on a **new Framework Document**. We know where the common ground is, and what is still open. Now it's time for bold decisions. **Slovakia supports a clear, ambitious, inclusive, result-oriented, and measurable Framework Document. It shall be based on the primary responsibility of states.** The issue of **good governance** is crucial.

Similarly, Political Declaration is another important document, which needs careful attention. Slovakia supports all constructive efforts by Japan and our EU partners aimed at focusing the Political Declaration on the notion of primary responsibility of states for Disaster Risk Reduction. While we have to take into account different levels of development and local conditions, we shall keep in line with consensus built around Millennium Development Goals.

Slovakia is determined to continue playing an active role with our EU partners in the negotiations on these substantive texts and stands ready to engage in an open and constructive dialogue with all partners.

Allow me to reiterate support of Slovakia to the success of this Conference and express hope for robust and broadly supported outcomes.

Thank You.