

STATEMENT

Republic of Austria

First Preparatory Committee meeting for the World Conference on Disaster Risk 14.,15.7.2014, Geneva, Switzerland

delivered by HFA Focal Point Dr Michael Staudinger on behalf of the Austrian Federal Government

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Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Austria I would like to express my gratitude to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction for convening the **First Preparatory Committee meeting for the World Conference on Disaster**.

Austria has built and maintained a 'culture of risk avoidance' at all levels– from national to local - over the course of many years. We strongly believe in integrated disaster risk reduction approaches, multi-risk management and forward-looking prevention. In Austria, the responsibility of managing and reducing risks, saving lives and livelihoods is not confined to the national, state and local governments and administrations. Instead, it is a shared responsibility with other important and indispensable actors, such as the private sector, academia and civil society. We have built strong public-private partnerships and count on more than 500 000 volunteers in the field of disaster risk reduction and civil protection – the Austrians are therefore among the nations with the highest percentages of voluntary work the world over. Acting locally is of utmost concern – as the local level is in the frontline of every disaster, boosting capacities and creating a sense of risk owner- and stewardship is one *the* priorities.

The nexus between disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation is indisputable and we have been working hard on the convergence between these two concepts and communities. Last year the Austrian government has adopted its National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, which acknowledges this fact and all of our state governments are either in the process of developing adaptation plans or have already done so.

Over the past years Austria's level of engagement: with regard to the ISDR has significantly increased. Given the scope of this statement, I would like to highlight two perspectives.

First, one of our federal provinces – the Tyrol together with its 279 municipalities– has become a main partner of the “Making Cities Resilient” Campaign..

Second, the new framework should build on the experience gained since 2005, maintain its basic structure and keep its general strategic objectives. The overall architecture of the HFA which covers the full disaster management cycle should remain in place but should be more concentrated on key elements.

Priorities for action should be focused more specifically on already existing and some new key activities and targets. It appears for instance that worldwide higher importance is still given to response to disasters than to prevention and reduction of the underlying risk factors. A renewed HFA should therefore have an even stronger focus and give even higher priority to reducing risks and the underlying factors, minimum standards for risk management within HFA could for instance be taken under further consideration to meet this objective.

The practical tools for implementation and progress monitoring like the **indicators** for the assessment of progress need further consideration and consolidation in the light of the experience of the past ten years. These indicators give a valuable oversight of national gaps and deficiencies and are a basis for setting priorities of actions and measures. A rather limited set of not overlapping, transparent and easily understandable indicators would be desirable. They should be adaptable and scalable to the needs of countries and applicable without creating too many administrative burdens.

Austria mainly supports the goal of building better local resilience and strengthening the capacity of local communities and households to reduce disaster risks. Experience worldwide shows that individuals are the real first responders in case of disaster and usually take immediate action.

Thank you.