

FIRST PREPARATORY COMMITTEE MEETING FOR THE UN WORLD CONFERENCE ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

STATEMENT BY MS. NANCY MADRIGAL MUÑOZ, CHARGÉ DE AFFAIRS a.i. OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA. (July 15, 2014. Geneva, Switzerland)

Mr Chairman:

The unfair international economic order and the continuing crisis faced by the world today, have determined that current multilateral trading system, underdevelopment, poverty and social exclusion, among other factors, constitute the main obstacles so that we, the Southern countries, achieve further progress in facing disasters.

In the presence of the challenge of climate change, disaster risk reduction remains a priority to ensure human survival. In this regard, we recognize that the ability to adapt in order to face climate change strengthens the ability to prevent disasters risk.

The Latin American region has been affected by major hurricanes, floods, droughts, earthquakes, events of sanitary nature such as epidemics of Dengue, Influenza A H1N1, Cholera, etc, which represent major hazards to our countries.

For instances, Cuba was severely affected by Hurricane Sandy in 2012. At that time, 343 230 people were evacuated in a previously organized way; 304 490 of them were transferred to other homes, thanks to the spirit of solidarity of the Cuban people and only 14 349 were sent to evacuation centers.

In the year 2013 the country observed a significant seismic activity in the south-eastern region, the increase of the drought frequency and the increase of the hazard of the introduction of exotic diseases, all of which has required a greater effort by the Government.

Nonetheless, Cuba, that has been victim of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States for more than fifty years, has prioritized the strengthening of the Civil Defense System. This system integrates all the institutions of the society to protect the people, their properties and the economic and social infrastructure.

We have worked on updating the institutional and normative frameworks for disaster risk reduction at the local level, on perfecting the national and local early alert and on organizing response and recovery actions. We continue carrying out studies of hazard, vulnerability and natural risk disasters, as well as those of technology and sanitary nature, linked to an assessment of the environmental impact.

We have also promoted South-South and/or bilateral cooperation, by holding workshops and other forms of exchange.

Likewise, Cuba also acknowledges the attention that the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) pays to the subject of disaster risk reduction. We support the Special Declaration on Climate Change and Integrated Disaster Risk Management that was passed at the Second CELAC Summit, held in January 2014 in Havana. This Statement emphasizes the importance of strengthening the links between Disaster Risk Reduction, Recovery and long term Sustainable Development Planning.

Mr Chairman:

After analyzing the documents related to this first meeting facing the Conference, we consider that the new framework for disaster risk reduction after 2015 must:

- Defend the validity of the Hyogo Framework for Action and build a non-binding and voluntary participation mechanism for the States.
- Reaffirm the guiding principles of Resolution 46/182 of the UN General Assembly as the basis of humanitarian assistance.
- Strengthen the figure of the State as governing and coordinating body for the strategies and measures on disaster risk reduction.
- Reaffirm the need for a favorable international environment, as a key element to link development and disaster risk reduction, as well as to promote international cooperation, financial assistance, free access to technology and capacity building in Southern countries.
- Address in a better manner sanitary disasters. Bear in mind that climate change contributes to the imbalance of ecological niches and to the decline of biodiversity. Acknowledge that epizootics and epiphytotic diseases are generated by biosafety problems, inappropriate zootechnical handling of

animal populations in breeding centers, generate new disease outbreaks to the global level.

- Defend that resilience requires a general and comprehensive culture in the population which allows to raise their perception of risk and facilitates collective decision-making processes in due time, in order to protect life, properties and cultural heritage.
- Support the efforts of the States in drawing up the normative legal framework at the national level as appropriate.
- Reaffirm that the States are the ones who must provide information about their strategies, plans, results and remaining challenges regarding disaster risk reduction, and that the methods and sources of assessment should be those recognized by the Member States of the United Nations.
- On the proposal of initiative for joint monitoring and integrated review of the strategies for disaster risk reduction, climate change and sustainable development, we consider that it would be premature to establish links between these processes. Reviewing and monitoring what has been internationally agreed in relation to climate change, should be placed in the hands of competent bodies headed by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- As for the proposal of involving the ECOSOC High Level Political Forum in reviewing and following up the implementation of the new framework, we contemplate that it is a newly created body which has not shown yet its viability for this type of objective.
- Concerning the proposal of a mechanism for Peer Reviews on the progress of disaster risk reduction, we estimate that not all the countries are currently in the same conditions to tackle an international review exercise where the fact of having the necessary material and human resources is a crucial element in this area.
- Regarding the proposal of national commitments, we think that it must be an exclusively national exercise, of an inner nature and under the consideration of the competent national authorities, provided that commitments be oriented to the exchange of good practices.

- On the proposal of indicators to assess compliance with the new framework, we believe that their selection should be voluntary. As regards to indicators of global nature, our appraisal is that not every country is under the same circumstances, nor it has equal national capabilities to address its vulnerabilities, so it is difficult to establish compliance percentages and deadlines.
- On the other hand, some of the indicators for the performance of the countries have an intrusive nature, including those dedicated to risk governance (budget and planning); reduction of existing risks (economic and financial sector); strengthening resilience (economic and financial sector); underlying drivers of risk and resilience (governance, intensive risk, business resilience, macroeconomic resilience); disaster risk (intensive risk) among others.
- Likewise, the indicator proposal also lacks those measuring the effective access of developing States to international financial assistance, official development assistance, technology transfer and capacity building.

Mr Chairman:

Cuba reiterates its strong support to the efforts directed to achieve further cooperation in disaster risk reduction management. Our country reaffirms its commitment to the preparatory process for the 2015 World Conference and we believe the new name of the international strategy should be *International Strategy for Disaster Risk and Resilience Management*.

Thank you very much.