

## Women's Major Group Statement at the 1<sup>st</sup> PrepCom for the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (3WCDDRR)

Thank you co-chairs.

Excellencies and Distinguished colleagues.

My name is Ms. Akiko Domoto from the Japanese Women's Network for Disaster Risk Reduction, and I'm speaking on behalf of the Women's Major Group. We welcome the opportunity to provide our views and recommendations in this process.

We note that the Guiding questions are one starting point for the discussions at the PrepCom, and the WMG and its members will respond to them during the multiple opportunities for input over the 2 days – during the plenary, chairs dialogue, technical workshops.

Today, I will focus on 5 points.

**First**, the WMG confirms that the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction should embody a vision of resilience, diversity, human rights, protection and sustainability, while keeping in mind the different capacities of communities. Building on the vision of the Hyogo Framework for Action to integrate a gender perspective, it is essential that women are involved in decision-making and planning processes about disaster risk reduction at all levels. It is also important that women have access to the resources needed to face disasters since they are among the most vulnerable, in particular due to gender roles and expectations.

**Second**, the Framework must link to the larger Sustainable Development agenda, including the sustainable development goals. A key component is a stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's and girl's rights and empowerment. However, to achieve gender equality and sustainable development, gender must be integrated throughout the SDGs, and sex disaggregated data must be collected related to all the remaining development goals (including education, climate change, rule of law, water, among others). The Women's Major Group for Sustainable Development, along with many others, are aiming to transform structures, institutions, and societies to achieve justice, equality and the realization of human rights for all. All this must also happen also through HFA2.

However, while there has been progress on the HFA, countries are not reporting much progress in Priority for action 4, on reducing the underlying risk factors and tackling causes of risk creation. This is a thread through the many processes under discussion for 2015. And, in particular, structural factors and root causes that increase risk also overlap with those that cause and exacerbate gender and other inequalities – factors such as macroeconomic policies, power and wealth asymmetries, distribution of the burden of unpaid and domestic care work, discrimination in rights to land and productive resources, and in participation in decision-making and leadership, as well as entrenched gender stereotypes and roles. This leads to differentiated risk, vulnerability and exposure to disasters.

**Third**, it is essential that strategies and actions for disaster risk reduction recognize and address gender inequality and also incorporate women's skills, perspectives and ideas, as well as the wide experience of women's organizations and associations, to guide robust action.

Reports indicate the HFA has so far not performed well in integrating a gender perspective 'into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management, and education and training'. Consultations on HFA2 are demanding entry points for women's leadership, which in many cases, means capacity development for women and men to facilitate that leadership, as well as raising awareness about the kind of problems women can face, and work on readiness and post disaster where needed.

In particular, the stakeholder outcomes in the Asia Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Bangkok, 22-26 June 2014 and the Sendai Call to Action on Gender and Diversity in DRR both call for participation of a minimum of 30% women and 30% men from diverse sectors, training and expertise, and of diverse ages and family formations, in all national, prefectural, and municipal policy-making and decision-making bodies dealing with Disaster Risk Reduction.

We provide some examples that guide action in specific areas:

In terms of *Urban risk reduction* (i), we agree it is a crucial area because most of the implementation is local and therefore it is necessary to build capacity at all levels so the communities can act. We have 2 illustrative cases:

- a) Japan's experience with the 2011 Great Earthquake and Tsunami demonstrated that the lack of connection between the Gender Equality Centers and the disaster management and decision-makers resulted in unmet needs in response and sheltering, such as a lack of security and privacy for women using facilities and breastfeeding. Once the Gender Equality Centers recognized the challenges in the shelters, they coordinated laundry services and supplies that met women's specific health needs during menses, pregnancy, and breastfeeding. But guidelines should already incorporate basic issues related to gender-differentiated needs to avoid the unmet needs from the outset.
- b) In most urban areas, women earn less than men for the same work, but also often occupy positions that earn less income. Where female-headed households are counted, they usually represent the majority of households below the poverty line, and they own less property (especially facilities that have been retrofitted to withstand disasters), have less access to health care and high nutrition levels for families, and therefore, have less ability to recover from disaster<sup>1</sup>).

(ii) National institution building;

(iii) Financial incentives for disaster risk reduction;

(iv) Climate change adaptation;

*Technology-related disaster* (v) requires specific considerations. Following the Fukushima Nuclear Energy Disaster associated with the 2011 Great Earthquake and Tsunami, women's groups are coordinating testing of coastal resources that provide food and nutrition to ensure safety for their families' nutrition. Groups have stepped in because government and the private sector are not aiding in recovery of the impacted areas.<sup>2</sup> The experience shows the power of women's self-organizing but also highlights the cost of inaction of government and other stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> from Honolulu, Hawaii risk assessments, USGS Tsunami Risk assessment project, University of Hawaii Social Science Research Institute studies

<sup>2</sup> reported at the 14 June Sendai Roundtable on Gender and Diversity in Disaster Risk Reduction

*Standards and regulatory compliance* (vi) are integral. While action should be developed according to national and local regulations as well as legal frameworks at all levels – including the human rights framework – actions should be based on standards that are appropriate for all. In addition, standards at different levels should ensure that resources reach the most affected through transparent mechanisms and with accountability measures.

*Risks in conflict prevention, migration as an effect of disaster, and food security* together form a complex set of issues, which would benefit from being addressed separately, as well as in concert with availability of safe water. Examples from Libya demonstrate that an all-female peacekeeping force resulted in decreased reports of sexual abuse and violence against women, which has significant implications for reducing risk in complex humanitarian emergencies and food relief assistance distribution. Thus it is important to explicitly consider actions to reduce risk of domestic and sexual violence.

**The fourth point is on** targets and indicators for monitoring and accountability. In order to ensure that targets and indicators for monitoring and accountability address socioeconomic and diverse dimensions of risk, it is critical that national governments collect and report on sex-disaggregated, age-disaggregated, and gender-specific data. This data is critical throughout the disaster risk cycle, such as targeting training and response in early warning systems, preparing inclusive and diverse risk assessments, developing appropriate preparedness, response, and recovery measures, adapting to environmental change, and ensuring equality in sustainable development.

The proposed global targets are missing the social dimension and the rights dimension that would provide entry points for issues of gender equality and women's rights. We recommend 3 additional targets

- 1) Reduce by x% persons who are displaced and prevented from accessing adequate education, water, food, sanitation, healthcare services, security, including but not limited to women, children, older persons, people with disabilities and the most marginalized.

It should be stressed that educating women and girls is a necessary tool for disaster risk reduction. Therefore goals should be included in future strategies to ensure that women and girls' education is not interrupted by disasters. It also links to the need for access to essential information and early warning systems, including availability to non-literate people, in order to take appropriate and timely action.

- 2) Ensure gender-specific health services in medical care and public welfare services, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), through all stages of life
- 3) Ensure diverse participation of women, youth, indigenous peoples, local communities, people with disabilities, sexual minorities, migrants, minority languages, and marginalized people in the development, implementation, monitoring and review of strategies regarding disaster risk reduction.

As some of the most impacted people, their views and perspectives must be taken into equal account. In this regard, we also call upon member states to uphold their commitment under articles 6 and 11 of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies and to further ensure that women with disabilities, who are subject to

multiple discrimination, are protected in such situations and able to fully and equally enjoy their human rights.

The indicators will require much more discussion to ensure they capture the multi-dimensional nature of the goals and targets, and to explicitly integrate gender into each one. And, additionally so that the HFA2 is not reduced to a list of measurable pieces that do not create a coherent whole with the potential to transform.

**The fifth** point is on reviewing implementation of the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction. The High Level Political Forum – which just finished its 2nd meeting in New York – is proposed as the body through which to review the Plan of Action in order to “assess and adjust implementation in the context of the review of progress on post-2015 sustainable development commitments.” As envisioned in the HLPF Resolution and the Rio+20 Outcome document, this modality could work. However, the HLPF is not yet fully formed and is at risk of falling short on the important element of transparency and accountability – particularly in terms of participation of Major Groups and stakeholders and access to information and all meetings, speaking rights, the right to submit documents and to provide expertise and best practice, and the inclusion of Major Groups and stakeholders’ contributions in official documents and to agenda-shaping. The HLPF also is yet to assure its political strength to function as a tool for accountability.

A review process of something as critical as the Plan of Action, with its links to sustainable development and climate change, must be undertaken with concerted effort by all stakeholders. And the process should allow space to discuss and debate the challenges faced in implementation and agree on meaningful solutions. It could incorporate a peer review mechanism at regional level and global level with meaningful participation opportunities for civil society. Civil society from Major Groups and other Stakeholders including women, youth, indigenous peoples, and marginalized communities- should be involved in any panel of experts, working group or equivalent bodies set up to support the review and accountability to the framework.

For the HFA review and monitoring, requiring collection and reporting of disaggregated data (by sex, age, etc) facilitates measurement of integration of gender and specifically in areas such as access to information, assets, knowledge, technology and participation, as well as develop strategies that take a gender perspective. It should be accompanied by guidelines for incorporating gender analysis and gender budgeting, on what inclusive participation should be in order to progress beyond “checking the box” for women, and on making strong efforts to reach out to grassroots, self-organized groups to facilitate balanced participation.

***In conclusion*** for any future strategies and policies on disaster risk reduction to be inclusive, effective and sustainable it is essential that they acknowledge and address the following:  
Women have less access than men to productive resources and opportunities, especially in rural areas. They have less access to information, are more likely to be illiterate, and are put at an increased risk of domestic and sexual violence after disasters.  
These factors are currently under-addressed, and must be corrected to ensure gender equality. This requires that women are involved equally in planning, decision making, and implementation and review processes at all levels, and that sex-disaggregated data is collected and made available.

We stand ready to support a transformational process. Thank you.