

**Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction  
Opening Statement by the Delegation of the United States of America  
As Prepared for Delivery by Thomas Staal, Acting Administrator for  
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International Development  
Sendai, Japan  
March 14-18, 2015**

Mr. President, Fellow Delegates,

On behalf of the U.S. government, I want to thank the Government of Japan for hosting this conference. We deeply value the strong friendship between Japan and the United States and our longstanding partnership on disaster risk reduction. I would like to acknowledge the extraordinary resilience of the Japanese people, and their response to the devastating Great East Japan earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear crisis. Gathering here is especially meaningful given the devastation Sendai endured only four years ago. It is a testament to Sendai's impressive recovery and demonstrates that reducing disaster risk and building resilience pays off when disaster strikes.

Like the rest of the world, the United States struggles with perennial risks and new challenges, like climate change, to building resilience. The United States continues to advance its commitments to disaster risk reduction aligned with the Hyogo Framework for Action: to develop policies that support disaster risk reduction; enhance early warning; educate communities; reduce risks; and strengthen preparedness. For example, the United States recently issued a new Federal Flood Risk Management Standard, acting on a key recommendation of the Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force and President Obama's Climate Action Plan. We also have strengthened tsunami early warning and mitigation systems regionally and globally.

The United States has been a leading supporter of disaster risk reduction through its development assistance. USAID alone has provided about \$1.2 billion to support disaster risk reduction in 91 countries over the past decade. As part of USAID's new policy on resilience, we are marshalling our humanitarian and development resources to help the world's most vulnerable mitigate risks in the face of recurring disasters. We are pursuing public-private partnerships to help scale up these efforts, including the Global Resilience Partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

The tenth anniversary of the Indian Ocean tsunami last December reminds us that disasters do not recognize national boundaries. Trans-boundary cooperation is critical to bolstering disaster preparedness, and the United States has forged new partnerships to that end. We are proud to be providing tsunami forecasting for the Pacific and Caribbean Tsunami Warning Systems, which is only accomplished through working with Japan and many other countries here today. And to build upon that partnership, we are pleased that our Federal Emergency Management Agency recently signed an agreement with Japan's Cabinet Office to exchange best practices in emergency management.

The United States has played a longstanding role in using Earth observations and research to inform the disaster management cycle. For decades, U.S. government scientific agencies, including NASA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the U.S. Geological Survey, have freely shared data and information from satellites and other observation networks, such as ocean buoys, with other nations to help better prepare for and respond to disasters. We welcome the progress many nations have made in advancing the principle of open data sharing as a means to strengthen disaster risk reduction.

The Hyogo framework catalyzed the progress we have made so far, and serves as an important foundation for the post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework. We know that the follow-on framework must reflect new trends and challenges, such as climate change. The United States has increased assistance eightfold since 2009 to help the most vulnerable developing countries adapt to climate change. In addition, President Obama has mandated all federal agencies to integrate climate change considerations into their international development efforts.

The United States is actively participating in the negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda, as well as in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiations. We recognize that there is an important relationship among disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, and sustainable development. However, the post-Hyogo framework should not seek to prejudge the sustainable development goals, financing for development, or climate change discussions, which are the subject of separate negotiations.

The post-Hyogo framework should also preserve the fundamental principle that each state has primary responsibility for disaster risk reduction efforts within its own territory, as well as its own sustainable development.

Last, because populations, including indigenous peoples, women, persons with disabilities, children and youth, displaced persons, and older persons, face differentiated impacts during and after a disaster, the post-Hyogo framework should take into account their perspectives.

The United States remains committed to working with the international community toward the common goal of reducing disaster risk and building resilience worldwide. We have a lot of work ahead of us, but I know that together

we can make progress. I look forward to our discussions at this important gathering.

Thank you, Mr. President.

