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Recent trends in disasters and their socio-economic and environmental aspects

Importance of disaster risk reduction in achieving the Millennium Development Goals^{*}

Note by the secretariat

1. This information note is prepared by the secretariat based on two publications—*Disaster Proofing Millennium Development Goals*,¹ and *Disaster risk reduction: an instrument for achieving the Millennium Development Goals*,² brought out by United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) recently.

2. The publication entitled *Disaster Proofing Millennium Development Goals* brought out the importance of disaster risk reduction in helping to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs form a blueprint, which was agreed to by 189 Member States of the United Nations and major international development agencies at the Millennium Summit in 2000. They define a series of concrete, well defined quantitative targets across key development sectors which are to be met by the year 2015. While there have been concerted efforts by the Governments to achieve these Goals, which had made definite progress, much more need to be done in the remaining next five years to achieve them. Therefore countries cannot afford to face set back to developmental initiatives from either natural disasters or other such events.

* The present document has been issued without formal editing.

¹ *Disaster Proofing Millennium Development Goals*, www.preventionweb.net/files/16098_16098brochuredisasterproofingmdg1.pdf.

² *Disaster risk reduction: an instrument for achieving the Millennium Development Goals*, UNISDR Publication www.preventionweb.net/english/professional/publications/v.php?id=15711.

3. At the High-level Plenary Meeting of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly on the MDGs, the Heads of State and Governments gathered at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 20 to 22 September 2010, while welcoming the progress made since 2005, expressed deep concern that the progress falls far short of what is needed. Recognising the mixed story of successes, uneven progress, challenges and opportunities, the outcome of the summit “acknowledged that disaster risk reduction and increasing resilience to all types of natural hazard, including geological and hydrometeorological hazards, in developing countries, in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters, can have multiplier effects and accelerate achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Reducing vulnerabilities to these hazards is therefore a high priority for developing countries. We recognise that small island developing States continue to grapple with natural disasters, some of which are of increased intensity, including as a result of the effects of climate change, impeding progress towards sustainable development”.³

4. In January 2005, at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, 168 Governments adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA); a 10 year plan to make the world safer from natural hazards. From the global blueprint for disaster risk reduction efforts, the HFA offers guiding principles, priorities for action and practical means for achieving disaster resilience for vulnerable communities. While significant progress has been made in implementing the HFA, much more needs to be done to integrate disaster risk reduction into sustainable development policies and planning, thus contributing towards achievement of the MDGs.

5. The Outcome Document: Chair’s Summary of the Second Session of Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction held in Geneva, June 2009 and attended by 152 Governments, 137 organisations and 1688 participants, recognized that “significant progress has been achieved since the HFA was endorsed by UN Member States in 2005, as reported in the Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction, particularly in terms of life-saving measures such as improved disaster preparedness and response, but that much more needed to be done. Governments, NGOs and other partners were united in the belief that greater urgency was now required to address the factors that are driving the increase in disaster risk, such as rural poverty and vulnerability, unplanned and poorly managed urban growth and declining ecosystems. Urgent action was necessary not only to reduce disaster risk, but also to maintain momentum in Millennium Development Goal achievement, including poverty reduction, adaptation to climate change and better health outcomes.

6. In the Asia-Pacific region, recognising much needs to be done in implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action, the Ministers and Heads of Delegation of the countries of Asia and the Pacific attending the Second Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in New Delhi, November 2007, called for the implementation of the HFA by “encouraging the national Governments and regional and sub-regional organisations to develop reporting mechanisms to monitor the progress made to achieve the goals of the HFA and to link such reports to other development processes, including the national strategies for poverty reduction and the MDGs”. At

³ MDG Summit 2010 Outcome Document, September 2010.

the Third Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Kuala Lumpur, December 2008, the Ministers and Heads of Delegation of the countries of Asia and the Pacific expressed their concern on the “region being most affected by disasters in terms of human and economic impacts, but also in occurrence, threatening to roll back hard-earned development gains and the achievement of the MDGs in the region”. The Fourth Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Incheon, November 2010, approved a five-year regional roadmap to establish climate resilient disaster risk management systems by 2015 that would contribute to sustainable development at the regional, national and community levels, and would subsequently help to achieving Millennium Development Goals.

7. UNISDR has brought out the publication entitled “*Disaster risk reduction: an instrument for achieving the Millennium Development Goals*”, which aims to assist members of parliament to oversee national progress and investments made towards achieving the MDGs in their countries, using disaster risk reduction. Goal by goal, it outlines priorities, steps and interventions needed to reduce or eliminate disaster risks. It shows how disasters can derail progress made towards the MDGs and development, and why disaster risk reduction was so important to maintaining development gains. It also points out a few key interventions that should be undertaken in reducing disaster risks to accelerate the process of achieving the MDGs, and how parliamentarians could achieve policy and practical changes, at both national and local levels.

8. According to UNISDR, the cost of disaster-related damage had risen 13 times from \$75.5 billion in the 1960s to roughly \$1 trillion in the past decade. Damage includes the collapse of schools during disasters, which makes achieving the MDGs on universal education a challenge. About 95 per cent of schools in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, were destroyed in the January earthquake. The health sector faces similar problems during the times of disaster. The 2005 Indian Ocean tsunami, for example, destroyed 61 per cent of health facilities in Indonesia’s Aceh province, killing many healthcare workers and causing an overall public health crisis. In flood-affected Pakistan 2010, half a million women were expected to give birth in the next six months, raising grave questions about healthcare delivery. The report highlights that the devastating floods in Pakistan were also a stark reminder that disaster risk reduction is a “must” to protect development gains and to help reach the MDGs of halving poverty by 2015.⁴

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