

TO: Members of the Policy Committee
A: Participants at the 10 April Policy Committee meeting
(see distribution list)

DATE: 17 April 2007

REFERENCE:

THROUGH:

S/C DE:

FROM: The Secretary-General

DE:

SUBJECT: Decisions of the Secretary-General – 10 April 2007 Policy Committee Meeting

OBJET:



Decision No. 2007/19 – Disaster Risk Reduction

- (i) The Secretary-General will take global leadership in articulating the urgent need for systematic action to reduce the exposure and vulnerability of communities, and to build the resilience of nations and communities to natural hazards. The UN will institute a series of high-level advocacy initiatives to raise global awareness of the benefits of disaster reduction and the consequences of not investing in it, as follows:
- a) In order to position the UN's role and launch the Secretary-General's championing of disaster reduction, the Secretary-General will present a major speech during the first session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Geneva from 5-7 June 2007 via video-link or pre-recorded message. **[Action: Secretary-General with support from OCHA for ISDR]**
 - b) The Secretary-General and other senior UN officials, including the DSG, the USG for Humanitarian Affairs and the UNDP Administrator will actively and systematically seek commitments of key actors, particularly governments, international financial institutions, donors, civil society and the private sector (i) to incorporate disaster risk reduction into their policies and (ii) to make specific identifiable investments to reduce disaster risks of vulnerable communities and countries. This could be done through letters to the heads of States, public speeches on relevant occasions, such as at CSD, ECOSOC and the General Assembly, and in bilateral meetings with member states and prospective donors. **[Action: Secretary-General and senior UN officials]**
 - c) The Secretary-General will announce and spearhead a major global report, produced under the auspices of the ISDR system, to raise political awareness and commitment to disaster risk reduction. **[Action: Secretary-General with support from OCHA for ISDR]**
 - d) The Secretary-General and other senior UN officials will make media statements and authorise

signed opinion editorials on World Disaster Reduction Day, 10 October 2007, and, as appropriate, at times of heightened public interest after the occurrence of major disaster events. **[Action: DPI, Secretary-General and senior UN officials]**

(ii) The UN should take a series of steps to enhance links and ensure synergy between disaster risk reduction and climate change agendas, which should include:

a) In statements on climate change adaptation, including those that may be made at UNFCCC COP-13, Bali, 3-14 December 2007, and at other upcoming events identified by UNDP and OCHA, the Secretary-General and other senior UN officials should identify the reduction of disaster risks as a necessary part of adaptation policies and call for the application of risk reduction measures to both protect today's population and prepare for increased hazards in the future. **[Action: UNDP and OCHA for ISDR for the Secretary-General and senior UN officials]**

b) The Secretary-General or a designee will write to the members of the Global Platform for Disaster Reduction to highlight the role of the Hyogo Framework for Action as a complementary framework to the UNFCCC, and to request their contribution to the implementation of the UNFCCC, including through the Nairobi Work Programme and the National Adaptation Plans of Action. **[Action: Secretary-General]**

(iii) Disaster risk reduction and the Hyogo Framework for Action should be further mainstreamed into the UN system's policies and practices, together with a rights-based approach, through the following actions:

a) The undg Executive Committee should play a more active role in strengthening the ISDR, particularly in focusing on national institutional capacity building and establishing stronger collaboration with regional organizations. The undg should further mainstream disaster reduction into development processes and systematically and coherently increase the UN system's support to Member States to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action, particularly through national development plans, poverty reduction strategies, and the UNDAF process. This may be further developed by the intergovernmental discussions of and subsequent recommendations on the High-Level Panel Report. The undg should set specific targets for disaster risk reduction goals in selected high-risk low capacity countries, and should collaborate with humanitarian actors, in particular the IASC, in the pursuit of these goals. **[Action: undg]**

b) The implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action and participation in the ISDR system should be considered at the fall 2007 meetings of the Chief Executives Board and the High Level Management Group. **[Action: CEB Secretariat]**

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Policy Committee Meeting, 10 April 2007
Summary Record of Discussion

Item 2. Disaster Risk Reduction

1. In opening the discussion, the timeliness of promoting systematic UN action on and championing of disaster reduction was emphasized, in order to capitalize on recent greater awareness of disaster risk reduction. Strong public awareness of the disaster issue since the Indian Ocean tsunami and Pakistan earthquake, the links between disaster reduction and climate change and between disaster reduction efforts and achieving the MDGs, all underscored the need for active UN engagement in this area. In addition to recommending high-level advocacy initiatives and harnessing synergies between disaster reduction and climate change adaptation efforts, the policy submission recommended that disaster risk reduction and the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) should be further mainstreamed into the UN system's policies and practices, particularly at the country level.
2. The meeting was informed that the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction would meet from 5-7 June 2007 for the first time and that it would provide an excellent opportunity for high-level UN advocacy to call on governments, civil society and others to strengthen HFA implementation. Due to scheduling constraints, the Secretary-General would be unable to attend in person, however would endeavor to deliver a statement via video-link or pre-recorded message to the Platform meeting. Advocacy efforts with donors at the Global Compact Summit in July 2007 was also suggested in order to strengthen private sector engagement in disaster reduction. Producing a cost-benefit analysis report for disaster risk reduction, akin to the Stern Review Report on the Economics of Climate Change, was proposed to highlight the financial and long-term benefits for governments and other members of the international community in focusing on preventative measures. It was also noted that in the Secretary-General's discussions with member states, particularly with high-risk countries, advocating for the inclusion of disaster reduction strategies within national plans should be emphasized regularly.
3. With regard to the link between disaster reduction and climate change, the importance of avoiding statements directly attributing disasters to climate change was stressed, as this link has not been fully established, notwithstanding that climate change was expected to increase the magnitude of some types of extreme events which could add to the disaster burden. It was suggested that in discussions with donors, financial support for the inclusion of climate change adaptation policies and disaster reduction policies in development plans should be highlighted, as current ODA policies did not reflect these priority areas.
4. National institutional capacity building in disaster risk reduction was deemed a key area in which the UN should focus, particularly in supporting countries listed on various disaster risk indexes. It was suggested that finance ministers, in addition to environment and disaster authorities, should be targeted within national capacity building initiatives to better ensure appropriate financial allocations to disaster risk policies at the country level. The importance of highlighting the need to link national disaster reduction policies with national

poverty reduction policies was raised. Implementation of disaster risk reduction policies within the UN and at the country level should also be in keeping with disaster reduction recommendations from the High-level Panel Report on System-wide Coherence.

5. It was noted that while some governments may have existing strong disaster reduction legislation in place, administering this legislation, with a focus on governance issues, should also be a part of capacity building efforts. With regard to legislation relating to disaster relief, the meeting was informed that in recent years there had been increased interest in the codification and progressive development of this area of the law. The lack of a comprehensive legal framework to accommodate international actors in disaster settings had resulted in the lack of or delay in access to disaster affected areas and delays in imports of relief goods, among other pressing issues. The IFRC has made progress in this area through its International Disaster Response Law (IDRL) project.

6. Policy Committee Members agreed on the importance of better integrating regional organizations in UN efforts to support the implementation of the HFA. Important initiatives of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in estimating the socio-economic effects of disasters, a model recently used by the World Bank following the Indian Ocean tsunami, was cited as an example of expertise regional organizations could lend to a more systematic approach adopted by the UN. It was also agreed that insurance companies involved in the disasters context should be included in UN discussions on disaster risk reduction with the private sector.

16. Noting displacement concerns in relation to disasters, it was pointed out that much good work had been done by the Office of the SRSG on the Human Rights of IDPs on human rights principles in disaster response. While these principles are primarily geared to disaster response and recovery, they are relevant in the area of prevention, in preparing relevant authorities to anticipate the human rights dimension and protection issues that emerge in the aftermath of a disaster. In this respect, national human rights commissions could provide training to national disaster authorities in a rights based approach, aspects of which are implicitly reflected in the HFA. The HFA also outlines the importance of integrating a gender perspective in disaster reduction plans, and calls for cultural diversity, age and vulnerable groups to be taken into account. Noting an inherent tension between disaster reduction and human rights, the importance of balancing public safety and human rights concerns, such as freedom of movement, was also emphasized.

7. The recommendations were endorsed with the following amendments: the Secretary-General would present a speech via video-link or pre-recorded message to the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction meeting in June 2007, as he was unable to attend in person. UN advocacy efforts would focus on the private sector, in addition to other key actors such as governments and donors. Reference was made to adherence to a rights-based approach in further mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into the UN system's policies and practices. It was added that implementation of disaster risk reduction policies within the UN and at the country level should bear in mind disaster reduction recommendations from the High-level Panel Report on System-wide Coherence.

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