BUILDING EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS TOWARDS RESILIENT SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES IN THE POST-2015 WORLD

Side event at the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

Organised by the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS)

17 March, 2015 14:00 – 17:00
Tohoku University, Room C200
Sendai, Japan

BACKGROUND

1. Small island developing States (SIDS) are highly prone to hazards both natural and man-made given their location amongst the most vulnerable regions in the world in relation to the intensity and frequency of natural and environmental disasters and their increasing impact. Thus, they face disproportionately high economic, social, environmental consequences and burdensome reconstruction challenges.

2. Six SIDS are among the top ten countries with the highest proportion of annual average losses against their yearly production of gross capital. Estimated average annual losses from tropical cyclone winds in SIDS are significant, from more than US$12 million in Fiji to around US$60 million in the Dominican Republic. In addition, SIDS have significant proportions of their produced capital and of their population exposed to extreme tsunamis. Given their small size, individual hazard events like cyclones may affect their entire territory and economy. As such disasters may destroy decades of capital investment and recovery is often slow.

3. Furthermore, disasters recur in frequent intervals making the task of rebuilding costly. Sea level rise, for instance, is expected to further aggravate inundation, storm surge, erosion and other coastal hazards; threatening vital infrastructure, settlements and facilities that support the livelihoods of island communities. The IPCC’s Fifth Assessment Report indicates that some SIDS are expected to face very high impacts where in some cases could have associated damages and adaptation costs of several percentage points of GDP. A 4 degree Celsius of warming would lead to sea level rise of 0.5 to 2.0 metres and is projected to lead to the displacement of between 1.2 and 2.2 million people from the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean.

4. While many SIDS have made strides in implementing DRR measures at the national and regional levels, they continue to rely on the support of development partners to sustain such efforts.

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1 (Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2013, UNISDR)
2 Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
5. The international community, in the outcome of Rio+20, reaffirmed the standing of SIDS as a special case for sustainable development given their unique and particular vulnerabilities. They suffer a wide range of impacts from climate change and potentially more frequent and intense natural disasters. Most recently, the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway) adopted at the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States held in Apia, Samoa outlines priority areas for action in DRR for SIDS. Paragraphs 51 and 52 of the document identify the critical need to promote cooperation and strengthen coordination at the national and regional levels, and mobilizing the public and private sector in disaster risk management. The document refers to important areas such as; access to technical assistance and financing for early warning systems; emergency relief and population evacuation; climate change adaptation and development; harmonizing national and regional reporting systems to mention a few.

6. Increased efforts are needed by both SIDS themselves and their development partners to reduce disaster losses and implement the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 and its successor agreement. Private sector investment and public private partnerships in key sectors and industries, including the tourism sector, can play a critical role in this process. Business investment in key sectors including infrastructure, agriculture, fresh water resources the tourism sector and others represent a critical opportunity to reduce disaster risk. Incentives via appropriate policies on corporate tax breaks or adequate pricing of risk by the insurance market, for example, can greatly increase the opportunities available to encourage disaster resilient investments.

7. As momentum builds towards implementing disaster risk reduction efforts, Post-2015 Development Agenda, the SAMOA Pathway and the outcomes of the 2015 World Conference on DRR, it is vital that any goals and actions reflect the reality of the vulnerabilities of SIDS. In this regard, it is important that existing partnerships are strengthened and new ones forged to enable SIDS to adapt and build resilience through a holistic approach; nationally, regionally and internationally. Enhancing DRR will require endeavours ranging from improving access to technology, access to financing for early warning systems, building adaptive and institutional capacities, sharing best practices, utilizing traditional knowledge and mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into all sectors of society. International support will be crucial given their capacity and resource constraints.

OBJECTIVES

In light of the special case of SIDS and their inherent vulnerabilities to disaster risks along with the burden this entails on developmental progress, the Side Event will aim to draw upon the national and regional experiences of SIDS through the perspectives of political leaders, experts and stakeholders in various aspects pertaining to the disaster risk reduction agenda for SIDS – including the SAMOA Pathway. It will also aim to strengthen existing partnerships and forge new ones to enable SIDS to adapt and build resilience through a holistic approach.

The event objectives are:

1) To highlight the vulnerability and exposure of SIDS to hazards leading to escalating losses and share the best practices and lessons learned to mitigate such vulnerabilities.
2) To call for immediate action and support to reduce the risks of disasters and enhance resilience in SIDS including through effective partnerships in priority DRR areas including those priority areas outlined in the SAMOA Pathway.

3) To explore both new and existing partnerships (including those announced at the SIDS Conference in Samoa) and examine how these can and will build the capacity of SIDS to better respond to hazards in light of the Post-2015 Development Agenda including through a holistic approach that is inclusive of all stakeholders in society.

AGENDA STRUCTURE

The event will be subdivided into two sessions consisting of a High Level Dialogue and a Panel of Experts.

First Segment
- High Level Dialogue amongst leaders from both SIDS and development partners and relevant stakeholders.

Second Segment

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1) Focussed attention on the special case of SIDS and their unique challenges in view of higher vulnerability risks and capacity constraints to respond and build back better and to emphasise the importance of strengthening monitoring and prevention, coordinated technical and financial support, strengthening national and regional institutions, reducing vulnerability for local communities, raising awareness and increasing preparedness and recovery from disasters.

2) Emphasis on the importance of strengthening international cooperation to augment domestic resources through bilateral and multilateral channels to ensure additional, predictable, sustainable and adequate means of implementation in capacity building, financial and technical assistance, and technology transfer including through effective partnerships in support of SIDS to implement the Post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction.

3) The way forward including consolidation of existing and new partnerships and how these will build through a holistic and inclusive approach alongside multiple stakeholders such as the private sector and civil society, the capacity of SIDS to achieve their sustainable development objectives in light of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and implementing the outcomes of the SAMOA Pathway.