

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS OF MID-TERM REVIEW WORKSHOP:
EUROPEAN MEETING ON THE MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE HYOGO FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION,
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

Date: 15 June 2010

The Senior European Regional Meeting was convened to address progress, shortcomings and potential improvements of the Hyogo Framework for Action as part of the Mid-Term Review coordinated by the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. The meeting, which was organized with a generous contribution from the Swiss government, took place at the International Environmental House 2 in Geneva. Co-chaired by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, Ms. Margareta Wahlstrom, and Mr. Toni Frisch, Head of Humanitarian Aid Department and Head of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit, the meeting saw the presence of European National Platforms Coordinators, Hyogo Framework for Actions Focal Points, International Organizations, and representatives of the Permanent Missions to the United Nations.

Overall the meeting sought new perspectives and insights through smaller groups discussions, plenary debates, and thematic presentations. It consisted of two sessions with specific thematic focuses: in each, participants were divided into three groups and different sets of key questions were assigned to them. The morning session invited participants to evaluate the current status of HFA implementation in order to obtain strategic input from senior key players. The afternoon session on the other hand concentrated on how the international community can further support disaster risk reduction and the HFA implementation.

Morning Session

SRSG Wahlstrom, thanking the Swiss Government for its generous contribution in support of the meeting, welcomed participants and briefly explained the role of regional networks in the promotion of DRR. She stressed the importance of collaboration, and emphasized the need to better define the responsibilities of different agencies involved in HFA implementation. Before leaving the floor to Mr. Frisch, Ms. Wahlstrom highlighted the need to improve both best practices and commitment to the HFA in the future.

Mr. Frisch followed up on the Chair's points, and stated that improving collaboration between different actors at both national and international level was of fundamental importance in the current context. Overall he stressed that the HFA agenda was well developed, but that unfortunately implementation on the ground was still problematic. At the global level it was in fact crucial to increase the visibility of the HFA and, most importantly, to show tangible results. In closing Mr. Frisch noted how one "can easily show disaster damages, but it's harder to show not-damages."

Subsequently Ms. Rossano provided a briefing on the Mid-Term Review. The presentation focused on the process through which inputs are being sought, and described preliminary findings of the literature review as well as the main points raised in previous regional workshops. Before leaving the floor, Ms. Rossano explained the goals of the workshop, and organized the groups for discussion.

The following is a summary of the discussions of the three groups, as reported in the course of the morning plenary session.

Summary of the Workshop Discussions

Group 1 → *Question 1: In your experience has the HFA been instrumental over the past five years in reducing disaster losses in communities and countries in country X/region Y? Question 1.1: What are the three most important achievements that contributed to reducing losses through the HFA implementation in country X/region Y? Question 1.2: What are the three most important elements that prevented the HFA from achieving its intended outcome i.e. the reduction of disaster losses? Question 2: How has the HFA informed decision making or priority setting in country X/region Y? Question 2.1: How are HFA reporting mechanisms supporting its implementation? Question 3: What elements of the HFA have worked less well in reducing disaster risk in country X/region Y? Question 3.1: What were the three most critical factors that prevented effectiveness in the areas identified in question 3 above? Question 3.2: What are the specific constraints to start or increase investments in disaster risk reduction in country X/region Y?*

Participants found that question 1 and 2 tended to overlap, and therefore decided to deal with them together. The group agreed that it was very difficult to separate the HFA from other processes and strategies in disaster risk reduction. DRR is in fact important in Europe but participants found it challenging to clearly identify what had to be done in DRR which could be specifically attributed to the HFA. Overall, the discussion highlighted that commitment to the HFA varied from nation to nation. All participants nevertheless believed that progress in the next 5 years was critical, and stated that time had to be used effectively. It was also reported that, broadly speaking, politicians are willing to invest in DRR activities, but that unfortunately they often do so without cost/benefit analysis. In reference to question 3, participants pinpointed three critical factors that prevented effectiveness of the HFA. First, the Framework's practical implementation on the ground was often missing. Second, it is difficult to understand who owns the HFA, and therefore hard to grasp who is in charge of what at both national and international level. Third, European countries tended to look at the HFA externally - in relation to the problems of developing countries - yet DRR policies should be consistent and internalised to promote resilience of local communities.

Group 2 → *Question 4: In your experience, does the HFA sufficiently encourage community participation and the utilization of local knowledge to reduce disaster risk? I.e. in country X/region Y, have communities and local authorities been empowered and is local knowledge and community action being useful/tapped into to manage and reduce disaster risk? If so, how? If not, why not? Question 4.1: How has the central government communicated HFA suggestions and commitments to local government? Are local governments empowered through ad hoc legislation and budget allocations to implement appropriate disaster risk reduction plans? Question 4.2: Which institutional mechanisms at the national level are responsible for ensuring this link with local governments and community organizations? Question 5: In your experience is there in country X/region Y a culture of safety and resilience at the level of the general public? Do people in country X/region Y seek information about land safety, building structures, etc. prior to building or purchasing properties? Do they expect politicians to have national and local disaster risk reduction plans in place? Do they acquire, or are required by law to acquire, insurance for their properties, crops and livelihoods if they live in disaster prone areas? Are they fully informed, trained if necessary, and equipped about what needs to be done in case of a disaster? Question 5.1: If you answered YES to question 5 above: What do you think are the three main elements that contributed to creating such a culture at the level of the general public? How long did it take for such a culture to develop and for the related behaviours to be in place in the general public? Question 5.2: If you answered NO to question 5 above: What do you think are the three main elements, at any level (government, media, public institutions, community organizations, international cooperation etc.) that should be in place in order to develop such a culture? Question 6: How can implementation of HFA Priority Action 4, reducing the underlying risk factors, be strengthened? Question 6.1: In your experience, what has been the best way to integrate DRR into development policies and programmes? Question 6.2: How can the importance of addressing the root causes of disaster risk be further brought to the forefront of the international agenda?*

Participants started the discussion by focusing on national legal frameworks for the implementation of the HFA. Serbia was in this case taken as a pivotal example, as in 2009 the country successfully adopted a law on DRR which was modelled directly against the HFA. Overall, in relation to both

question 4 and 5, the group found that the link between governments and citizen responsibility should be increased. Participants in fact reported two separate trends: in some cases emphasis was placed upon state responsibility, pointing at governments offering to buy properties located in risky areas; in others upon individual responsibility, looking at states where citizens themselves are obliged to pay when they choose to stay or build in high risk areas and disasters occur. All participants furthermore stressed that risk awareness can be driven by organizations other than the government; as such, that there is the need to involve different actors - such as small and medium enterprises - in the future of DRR. In relation to question 6, the group highlighted that it was necessary to quantify the success of different measures, rather than simply qualifying them. Moreover, that it was fundamental to spread best practices: in this context, it was suggested that countries with long-term experience should share their knowledge with others. In terms of underlying risk factors participants agreed that climate change should be better integrated into the HFA.

Group 3 → *Question 7: What kind of international instrument/tool do you think would be most useful in furthering DRR to follow-up to the HFA beyond 2015? Question 7.1: Would setting up specific international and national targets help improving DRR impact at the national and local level? Question 7.2: What kind of international institutional structures/instruments would be most helpful to continue to accelerate and support risk reduction work? Question 7.3: The HFA is a voluntary international instrument. Has the voluntary nature of the HFA played a positive or negative role in its implementation and buy-in at the international and national level?*

Participants agreed that the HFA had been a useful platform for international stakeholders, in particular the UN. In answering question 7 the group agreed that clearer indicators had to be put into place in order to assess HFA implementation at national level. In terms of structures, the discussion highlighted that it was important to increase the institutional capacity of nations and to further global coordination, while in regard to instruments to accelerate and support DRR work participants found important to focus on capacity building. They stressed that this can be done by developing new methodologies that take into account not only disaster per-se, but also institutional capacities at both national and sub-national level. Moreover, different participants raised specific suggestions to support risk reduction work. For some increasing public awareness on DRR was a necessity, as many examples showed that information and knowledge could sensibly reduce the number of victims caused by disasters. For others ISDR activities had to be based upon the human rights framework, as this was considered a key factor to increase their success. Overall, the group agreed that regional planning and focus were fundamental in order to continue, accelerate, and support DRR work, and that in Europe, specifically, it could be useful to rely directly on EU financial instruments.

Concluding remarks by the Co-Chairs

SRSW Wahlstrom stated that, above all, it was necessary to discover what moves the DRR agenda forward, and what triggers change in risk reduction strategies. She highlighted that at the moment the EU was investing in DRR, but it did so in an ad-hoc manner. As such, investments are specific and related to certain risks only. Nevertheless, it is important to invest in overarching DRR frameworks as well, and to integrate such frameworks in the new budget of the EU. The Chair finally stated that there was too much focus on response but not enough on prevention, and zeroed in on the necessity to increase capacities, stressing how this can be done through shared best practices and the promotion of inter-institutional cooperation.

Before closing the morning session Ms. Rossano conveyed that the HFA was a young instrument, and therefore its implementation was still in progress. Nevertheless, she highlighted that the process was ongoing, as demonstrated by the willingness of states to pursue DRR strategies.

Afternoon Session

Ms. Mervi Kultanaa, First Secretary at the Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations in Geneva, provided a briefing on Finland's efforts in furthering DRR in development cooperation. She reported that DRR had been mainstreamed in development strategy, in program and project implementation and assessment, and in policy dialogue and negotiations. Yet, she also highlighted that the country had no coherent disaster reduction strategy, and noted how this limited to some extent the effectiveness of intervention. Furthermore Ms. Kultanaa briefly reviewed additional initiatives that should be considered in furthering international cooperation on DRR, and focused specifically on the need to link different fields of action and promote discussion at multiple level. Ms. Kultanaa concluded by highlighting that "only when diverse development cooperation interventions are connected in a strategic manner, they can be effective in making a difference in DRR at the community level."

Mr. Marcus Oxley, Chairman of the Global Network of Civil Society Organizations for Disaster Reduction, provided a short review of *Frontline 2009*, the Network's independent assessment of progress towards HFA implementation. He stressed that DRR was fundamentally a local issue, and therefore that "effective and lasting solutions must be appropriate to local realities, and built on indigenous knowledge and local institutions." As such, he conveyed that a balanced top-down/bottom-up approach was needed, and hence that there should have been a shift in emphasis from national policy formulation to local implementation. To conclude Mr. Oxley noted that legislative progress in DRR was important, but that ultimately capacity had to be built locally. Disaster reduction should in fact "be owned by the community," and this can only be rendered possible through the development of skills, the sharing of knowledge, and the promotion of interest at the local level.

Summary of the Workshop Discussions

Group 1 → *What are the three most important things now that country X/region Y would benefit from, from the international community, in furthering the implementation of the HFA at the national and local level?*

The group conveyed that supporting DRR implementation at the local level was a priority, as sub-national and municipal dimensions of disaster risk reduction are still underdeveloped. In this context it appeared necessary to promote a more integrated approach encompassing and connecting different actors such as UN agencies, NGOs, and civil society networks. Moreover, participants highlighted the importance of furthering inter-governmental cooperation, and saw peer exchanges between countries as beneficial for DRR implementation. Ultimately, they agreed that financial resources for DRR had to be more reliable, and stressed the need to promote a stronger communication campaign on ISDR work.

Group 2 → *What adjustments, if any, would be helpful in the international structures of disaster risk reduction to help accelerate the implementation of the HFA?*

The group positively noted that the HFA already encompassed different actors at the global, regional, and national level. Nevertheless, it stressed that the framework did not yet produce tangible results for local communities, as there was an implementation gap at the sub-national level. As such participants conveyed that it was necessary to improve connections between

different actors, and to promote national platforms for DRR where actors' roles are clearly defined. Overall, participants stressed that it was ultimately necessary to expand and better link DRR to humanitarian action.

Group 3 → *What kind of financial instruments, as well as monitoring mechanisms, would be helpful in support of DRR action at the national, local and community level?*

The group discussed disaster insurance, and agreed that such instrument was important but not enough. It also conveyed that, although financing of DRR was a problem, countries and organisations should not rely on private funding at sub-national level. In relation to monitoring mechanisms, the group highlighted that the HFA was above all a guiding framework. As such, participants stated that establishing hard monitoring instruments to assess performances against it was complex and perhaps counterproductive, and suggested that softer measures could lead to better results than hard ones.

The presentation of individual group findings was then followed by an open floor discussion. Some proposed a DRR financing conference to raise the overall profile of the issue and to consider it from a common standpoint. Such conference would promote the coordination of efforts in the development, disaster reduction, and humanitarian fields. Furthermore, it would encourage the integration of different agents (private sector, civil society, state) into a single framework or a “partnership triangle.” Others stressed that DRR should always be mainstreamed into development in a rough and though way. In one particular view, rough and though measures were seen as necessary in order to keep actors in line with their DRR commitments. More generally, most participants reiterated that it was necessary to share best practices. States should be committed to collaborative approaches, in order to improve effectiveness and reduce costs.

Concluding remarks by the Chair

SRSG Wahlstrom, thanking participants for their most valuable comments, explained that it was extremely difficult to mix the agenda of national and international actors. Bringing these perspectives together – as it had been done in the course of the workshop – proved to be a complex but useful exercise. The Chair then reiterated that at this point it was important to consider setting specific targets, and suggested that serious peer reviews should be conducted between two or three countries, in order to highlight what had been done in each in DRR and why it worked differently for each country. SRSG Wahlstrom finally reminded participants that financial support was vital to DRR, yet she expressed the hope that agents would consider how to improve efficiency before raising extra resources.

Participants:

Toni Frisch Magdalena Lesjak	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation Programme Manager, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
Gerhard Stössel	Focal Point DRR, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
Anne-Florence Pasquier	University Trainee, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
Manuela Chiapparino Milivoje Popovic	Focal Point for Europe, GFDRR, World Bank, Brussels Head of Department for International Cooperation and Coordination, Ministry of Security, Bosnia & Herzegovina
Jovana Andjelic	Senior Adviser for Cooperation with International Organizations, Ministry of Security, Bosnia & Herzegovina
Orhan Topcu Herzegovina	Head, DPPI SEE Secretariat, Sarajevo, Bosnia &
Carole Lanteri Pande Lazarevski	1st Adviser, Permanent Mission of Monaco, Geneva National Coordinator for NP DRR Implementation National Platform, Republic of Macedonia
Pegah Pishkoohan Henrique Vicêncio	Attaché, Permanent Mission of Sweden, Geneva Head, Early Warning and Hazards Prediction Unit, National Authority for Civil Protection, Portugal
Sara Öberg	Attaché for Humanitarian Affairs, Permanent Mission of Spain, Geneva
Karl-Otto Zentel Francesc Pla	Chief Executive Officer, DKKV, Germany Deputy to the Executive Secretary, EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement of the Council of Europe, Council of Europe
Ian Clark	Head of Unit, DG-4, Civil Protection, Prevention and Preparedness European Commission, Brussels
Peter Hertel Rasmussen Mette Grønvald Nielsen	Minister Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Denmark Intern
Antony Spalton Dermot Carty Leon Esteban Magyar Milán Marissa Ryan Geneva	Senior Risk Recovery Specialist, UNICEF Deputy Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF Risk reduction and recovery coordinator, UN Habitat, Geneva First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Hungary, Geneva Attaché (humanitarian), Permanent Mission of Ireland,
Michael Meier Marissa Ryan Alina Narusova	Third Secretary, Permanent Mission of Switzerland, Geneva Humanitarian Attaché, Permanent Mission of Ireland, Geneva Migration Policy Officer, International Organization for Migration (IOM)
Corsmas Goemans	Senior Policy Advisor, Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, The Netherlands
Dijana Sabovic Jonas Vevatne Jelisaveta Djurickovic-Tuvic Jonathan Abrahams	Ministry of Interior, Serbia National Emergency Planning College, Norway Minister-Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Serbia, Geneva Coordinator, Emergency Preparedness and Capacity Building, Health Action in crises, World Health Organization
Heather Papowitz	Medical Officer, Emergency Preparedness and Capacity Building, Health Action in crises, World Health Organization
Marisol Estrella Maryam Golnaraghi	Project Officer, UNEP/PCDMB Chief, Disaster Risk Reduction Programme, World Meteorological Organization
Oyuna Umuralieva	Human Rights Officer, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Wanda Wicki	Executive Secretary, PLANAT
Mervi Kultamaa	First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Finland, Geneva
Jamshed Khamidov	Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Tajikistan, Geneva
François Gerard	Focal point, HFA, Ministry of the Environment, Paris
Jean-Paul Seytre	Counsellor for Development Cooperation, Permanent Mission of France, Geneva
Jacques Deveze	Ministry of the Environment, Paris
Jonas Vevatne	National Emergency Planning College, Permanent Mission of Norway, Geneva
Lloyd Timberlake	Consultant
Marcus Oxley	Chairman, Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction, TEARFUND
Dusan Zupka	OIC, Emergency Preparedness Section, Emergency Service Branch, OCHA
Michael Meier	Humanitarian Affairs Officer, OCHA
Catherine Goger	Advisor, Permanent Mission of Austria, Geneva