

Report on the Side Event

"Reducing Disaster Risk and Building resilience to Disasters in Cities" **Side Event at Global Platform for DRR**

Organized by: the Global Forum for Urban Risk Reduction (UCLG, UN-HABITAT, Metropolis, ICLEI, EMI, UNDP, UNISDR)
June 6th, 2007, Geneva
Chair: Paul Taylor (UN-HABITAT)

Objectives of the meeting

There has been a growing consensus that there is a need for a strong impetus for urban disaster risk reduction. Recognizing the need for collaborative efforts, broad consultation has been made on the establishment of Global Forum for Urban Risk Reduction.

During the meeting/First Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR) from 5-7 June 2007 at Geneva, a side event on *"Reducing Disaster Risk and Building resilience to Disasters in Cities"* was held:

- 1- To launch the Global Forum for Urban Risk Reduction as a means of addressing the challenges that the local government authorities are facing with regard to reducing disaster risk in urban areas
- 2- To receive further contributions, cooperation and commitments from concerned agencies and stakeholders in support of future activities of the Global Forum

The Global Forum is open for participants to agencies, organizations, governments, and other entities who have a commitment and a willingness to make a contribution to urban disaster risk reduction. These include but are not limited to:

- Permanent Missions to the United Nations in Geneva (Permanent Representatives).
- International Organizations including UNDP, ISDR, UN-HABITAT, OCHA, IFRC, WB, ADB, EC, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNOSAT, UNITAR, UNU
- Municipalities such as , Istanbul, Manila, Mumbai, Tehran, Bogota, Cape Town,
- Donor community including ; USAID, DFID, SDC, SIDA, GTZ, JICA
- City Associations such as : Metropolis, UCLG, CityNet, ICLEI, City Alliances, World Urban Forum
- Regional, Inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations actively engaged in ISDR and in urban risk issues such as EMI, ADPC, ADRC, CAPRADE,
- Academia, including, Kobe University, Kyoto University, University of Karlsruhe,
- Official delegates from different countries including donor countries

Suggested immediate actions of the Global Forum have included: training of urban professionals and managers; city-to-city technical exchanges; and awareness and advocacy activities. The side event was aimed at receiving further inputs from participants on activities and structure of the Global Forum.

Summary Inputs from Participants in the Establishment of Global Forum

- Participants agreed that there is a clear need for Global Forum
- In design of Global Forum, further consideration is needed for prioritization at many levels, including
 - target group (socio economic group –urban poor, most vulnerable groups)
 - identification of cities at particular risk
 - targeting poor countries –with limited capacity
- It was suggested that Global Forum needs to convey a sense of urgency – not just to be another coordination mechanism, but to start actions addressing real problems on the ground immediately
- Governance structure of the Global Forum needs to be further developed, including
- Establishment of regional structures for cooperation and exchange should be considered
- Governance structure of Global Forum should aim at organizational efficiency –not duplication but collectivity
- Global Forum should not to be top down, but more drive towards on-going civil society initiatives
- Linkages should be created with organizations that are not yet represented -- need to develop a mechanism for broader involvement of stakeholders and actors (e.g. academia, professional organizations)
- Mechanism to harvest lessons learned and upscale good practices is necessary
- Linkages need to be created with broader governance and development agenda

Conclusions / Recommendations:

Participants agreed there is a clear need for coordination, collaboration and exchange that support disaster risk reduction at the city level, and endorsed the establishment of the Global Forum. Some key recommendations from the participants included:

- **Actions should be city focused but prioritize the most vulnerable populations with concrete and effective action plans.**

The Global Forum on Urban Risk Reduction should contribute to improvement of the capacity of cities and towns to respond to DRR problems and to support local authorities in implementing DRR, in order to provide safer living conditions for their communities and their citizens and to protect their assets and livelihoods.

The Global Forum should work closely with and involve all relevant actors, local authorities and their communities to understand the issues in the field and to solve the impediments to local level implementation to DRR. In this effort, the Global Forum should address the need of the most vulnerable populations as well as support cities and towns in least-developed countries. Other roles of the Global Forum should be to focus on raising awareness and advocacy for local level DRR action; and to build mechanisms for knowledge sharing, in particular city-to-city exchanges. Further, the Global Forum should ensure coordination of actions among relevant stakeholders working in this field to improve the efficiency of use of resources and avoid duplication.

- **Governance structure of the Global Forum for Urban Risk Reduction reflects good governance message of local empowerment and decentralization**

The Global Forum agenda should be led by local authorities with support of international organisations and other relevant stakeholders who contribute to local level DRR. Such broad but converging interests should be represented fairly in the governance structure of the Global Forum.

The Global Forum should encourage effective decentralization and empowerment of local authorities, including cities and towns, local government organizations, and grass roots community organizations, especially women's organisations. It should recognize the value of local and vernacular knowledge, improve outcomes of local initiatives, and seek synergy with regional and global efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness.

- **The Global Forum on Urban Risk must be aligned with and supports existing structures, policies and initiatives, and not to duplicate them**

The Global Forum on Urban Risk Reduction should remain focused on its DRR agenda for cities and towns, and complement existing initiatives currently working at local spheres.

There are several actors who work and intervene at the local level and can make a contribution to the Global Forum agenda. Thus, the Global Forum should seek and encourage a broad involvement of all stakeholders. Similarly, linkages between global initiatives such as the MDGs, and other developmental, environmental and educational initiatives and DRR will be promoted.

Additional Comments

It was felt that there is a high level of complementarity with other mechanisms created during the Global Platform launch, such as a platform supporting community actions, created through "From National Frameworks to Local Action: Implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action". Linkages and collaboration with these should to be further explored.