

2011 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction

UNISDR Statement at the Launch of the Arabic Edition, 6 July 2011, Beirut

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be here in Beirut today to join all of you in launching the Arabic Edition of the UN 2011 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction "Revealing Risk, Redefining Development". We are very grateful to UN-ESCWA and UN Information Center in Lebanon for hosting us here and coordinating this launch event.

The 2011 Global Assessment Report – or GAR11 - is the second edition of this biennial UN publication on disaster risk reduction and its English version was launched by the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon in Geneva in May 2011.

The Report is a major initiative of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR). While coordinated by UNISDR, the bulk of the data, research and analysis is developed by a large number of partners. These include universities and scientific institutions across all regions, civil society organisations, UN agencies, development banks and individual experts. And maybe more importantly, they include more than 130 national governments, including Lebanon and many countries from this region, as well as inter-governmental organisations plus a growing number of local governments.

In this regard, the Global Assessment Report is as much a process as it is a product. The process is one of continuous engagement in joint research, assessment and evaluation, and analysis across the ISDR system. The presentation of the findings in the form of the Report itself, but more importantly, through a vast range of data, research papers and case studies directly contributes to the achievement of the Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA) through monitoring risk patterns and trends and progress in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Furthermore, the report offers guidance and suggestions to governments and non-governmental actors alike, on how they can, together, reduce disaster risks.

The report has some compelling news: globally, mortality risk for weather-related hazards – i.e. the risk of dying due to a flood or tropical cyclone – is declining. However, this is not so in the Middle East and North Africa. Also, the cost of disasters is rising and the risk of economic loss and damage is increasing across the globe. This, unfortunately, is also the case for this region. In fact, the GDP exposed to floods in the Middle East and North Africa region tripled over the last 40 years.

The report highlights that drought risk – as you know a major risk in this region – is still poorly understood. A number of case studies including from Lebanon, Jordan and Syria show the scale of the impact that droughts have on local economies and the lives and livelihoods of large numbers of the population.

But disaster risk reduction is still a relatively new effort in the region. Therefore it is not surprising that the governments in this region rate their progress in reducing disaster risk lower than the global average. This may be a good sign – it reflects an understanding of the complexities of reducing disaster risk. And there are areas in which significant progress is reported.

Lebanon, for example, reports substantial achievements in developing preparedness and contingency plans. Across the globe, countries have yet to find a clear political and economic path to investing today for a safer tomorrow.

GAR11 delves deeper into these challenges. The following presentation will go into more detail of how the report highlights the need for systematic accounting of disaster losses and impacts, and for the comprehensive assessment of risks a country faces. You will hear about innovative approaches that are emerging in areas such as public investment planning and social protection. And a new risk governance paradigm is explored that could reflect the political and economic imperative for disaster risk reduction and builds on creative partnerships that can strengthen accountability and effective disaster risk management and adaptation.

UNISDR greatly appreciates the close cooperation with UN-ESCWA and the League of Arab States in advancing risk reduction efforts in the region and supporting countries enhance their capacities and knowledge on disasters, risks and vulnerabilities. We look forward to continued collaboration, not least in the development of the next Global Assessment Report due in 2013.