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The Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR) of the United Nations presents its compliments to the Permanent and Observer Missions to the United Nations in New York.

With reference to the ministerial level meeting entitled *Reducing Disaster Risks in a Changing Climate*, convened by the Secretary-General, in New York, on 29 September, 2008, I am pleased to share with you the Chair's Summary for your information.

The Secretariat for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction avails itself of the opportunity to renew to Permanent and Observer Missions to the United Nations in New York the assurance of its highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JH'.

New York

5 November 2008

REFERENCE:

CHAIR'S SUMMARY
MINISTERIAL MEETING
ON REDUCING DISASTER RISKS IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

New York, 29 September 2008

The Secretary-General convened a Ministerial meeting on *Reducing Disaster Risks in a Changing Climate*, in New York, 29 September, coinciding with the General Debate of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. The meeting aimed at strengthening the understanding of the urgent need to promote and invest in disaster risk reduction as a first line of defence in climate change adaptation, as well as to help mobilize resources for disaster risk reduction from the national to international levels. The meeting demonstrated clear evidence of increased collective commitment to accelerate the implementation of disaster risk reduction, as well as to finding innovative, robust solutions to address the increasing disaster risks created by a rapidly changing climate. Nearly 200 participants attended from more than 90 Member States at the Ministerial or Ambassador levels.

This is the Chair's summary of the meeting, grouped under six key topics.

We face greater risks – testimony of disaster losses

Participants expressed considerable concern at the increasing number and impact of disasters, in particular the alarming frequency and intensity of severe weather patterns and events, which are affecting millions of people around the world. Disasters can set back decades of development overnight and developing countries and poor people are disproportionately at risk. The achievement of internationally agreed development goals, in particular, Millennium Development Goals, is increasingly threatened by growing vulnerability to natural hazards. Africa, Small Island Developing States and the Asian and African mega-deltas face a special vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, with the scale of potential consequences not yet fully appreciated.

Urgency of implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action

Delegations emphasized that under the current circumstances, the need for action was more urgent than ever, and stressed the need to strengthen the role of the UNISDR secretariat. They emphasized disaster risk reduction strategies as a core element of adapting and building resilience to climate change and urged the need to draw on the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015) and disaster risk reduction knowledge to reduce disaster losses and to protect the world's most vulnerable populations against adverse effects of climate change. The need to intensify and strengthen international and regional cooperation in disaster risk reduction was also emphasized.

Disaster risk reduction must be an explicit and integral component of international climate change policy

Participants stressed that disaster risk reduction and adaptation should be integrated in any new mechanisms set up under the post-2012 agreement, as agreed in the Bali Action Plan. The logical entry point for developing adaptation strategies is to build on the existing experience and knowledge of disaster risk reduction. Participants called for bringing climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction together, at both national and international levels. Delegations welcomed the work done so far under the Hyogo Framework for Action and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). They urged that provisions under the Hyogo Framework for Action on the one hand; and adaptation under the UNFCCC on the other, be aligned. Furthermore, the disaster risk reduction and adaptation communities should continue to share their experiences to minimise duplication and maximise efficiency. Failing to integrate climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction would result in establishing parallel structures and funding mechanisms. This would not only waste time and money, but would also undermine progress towards our common objective of reducing vulnerability and achieving the MDGs.

Co-benefits between climate change mitigation and disaster risk reduction strategies were also emphasized. It was pointed out that risk reduction measures, such as reforestation to stabilize steep slopes, can have positive impact on climate change mitigation through enhanced carbon sequestering.

Investing in disaster reduction must be scaled up

Experience in a number of countries has shown that disaster risk reduction measures can lower the impact of natural hazards. Many countries cited the need to ensure long term, stable and predictable core financial resources to bolster support for developing countries and help them build the capacity for disaster reduction.

It is important that disaster risk reduction measures are explicitly included in the eligibility criteria for climate change adaptation funding, both for the adaptation funds currently under negotiation, as well as for possible new instruments that might emerge due to growing needs in this area. It was recommended that adaptation funds should take full advantage of the principles of the Hyogo Framework for Action. Only through systematic reduction of disaster risks can the costs of disaster response and recovery be limited. Some countries drew attention to the fact that they were already providing a percentage of funding from their humanitarian budget for disaster risk reduction.

Mainstreaming into sustainable development

Delegations stressed the urgency for disaster risk reduction strategies and climate change adaptation to be mainstreamed into sustainable development policy. In this context, participants emphasized the need to promote globally the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, which systematically integrates disaster risk reduction into sustainable development and measures for poverty eradication, and specifies priorities for action for its implementation. The challenge is to work together, to assist developing countries to integrate climate change and disaster risk reduction into national development strategies. The principles of the Paris Declaration and the new guidelines being developed by OECD are important instruments, which we should be careful to observe in the disaster reduction context.