

Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction 2007 (ACDR2007)

-- Working Together for a Safer World --

25-27 June 2007

Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan

Initial Concept Note

- Revised as of 31 May 2007 –

1. Since the World Conference on Disaster Reduction

1.1 The World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) held in January 2005 in Kobe, Hyogo, Japan, has been a most important landmark for current global efforts to reduce disaster risks and vulnerabilities to hazards over the next decade. It conveyed the global concern over the rising incidence and scale of disasters and the increasing vulnerabilities of peoples. It also acknowledged the critical need for holistic disaster reduction approach. Most importantly, the Conference adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters as a global disaster reduction agenda which outlined five priorities for action that would guide all stakeholders at all levels in pursuit of international commitments and objectives.

1.2 Since WCDR, important efforts in line with the implementation of the HFA have been undertaken or have been underway at various levels. In September 2005, the Ministerial Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction was convened in Beijing, China, and drew a platform for sharing and exchanging best practices and lessons learned and for promoting regional cooperation among Asian countries on HFA implementation. In May 2005, the International Recovery Platform was launched in Kobe, Japan, in accordance with the recommendation of WCDR and to support HFA implementation. In March 2006, the Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction 2006 was convened in Seoul, Republic of Korea. It reviewed progress made, identified obstacles and relevant issues, and reiterated the collective resolve and support for HFA implementation through strategic national action planning and promoting a holistic disaster risk reduction approach. More recently, in January 2007, the International Forum on Tsunami and Earthquake was held in Kobe, Hyogo, Japan, to follow up on progress in the implementation of the HFA and to generate feedback on ongoing post-disaster recovery.

1.3 Moreover, the Regional Consultative Committee on Disaster Management, a regional consultative mechanism in Asia supported by the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, had convened its fifth meeting in Hanoi, Vietnam in May 2005 and its sixth meeting in Kunming, Yunnan Province, China in November 2006. These recent meetings made follow-ups to WCDR and the implementation of HFA and resolved to use the regional mechanism for monitoring on progress, including the preparation of a baseline report of the status of disaster risk reduction efforts in the region.

1.4 Important initiatives and programs on disaster risk reduction have also been implemented at sub-regional level by the ASEAN, SAARC, Typhoon Committee, Panel on Tropical Cyclones, ICIMOD and MRC, among others.

1.5 The Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR), in consultation with stakeholders, has made significant progress in assisting countries and organizations in implementing the HFA. It has recently issued the Guidelines for Reporting on Progress on the Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action and is currently developing the Guide on Indicators for Assessing Progress on Disaster Risk Reduction and has distributed them to countries, relevant organizations, and networks. UN/ISDR has received some feedbacks and is still waiting for more to come. It has also released a consultative version of the publication "Words into Action: Implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action".

1.6 Further, The UN/ISDR secretariat and its partners have made disaster risk education and safer school facilities the two key themes of the 2006-2007 World Disaster Reduction Campaign. The 2006-2007 World Disaster Reduction Campaign on Education: "Disaster Risk Reduction Begins at School" launched in June 2006 highlights the need to keep our children safe and to involve them in strengthening disaster preparedness. The campaign aims to inform and mobilize Governments, communities and individuals to ensure that disaster risk reduction is fully integrated into school curricula in high risk countries and that school buildings are built or retrofitted to withstand natural hazards. The Campaign's key partners include UNESCO, UNICEF, ActionAid International, the IFRC, and the ISDR's thematic cluster on knowledge and education.

2. Strengthening of the ISDR System

2.1 A major current development is the strengthening of the ISDR system for enhanced capacity and effectiveness in supporting countries and organizations in the implementation of the HFA. This has become necessary as the demand for ISDR support and guidance grow. Moreover, strengthening the ISDR system is necessary to increase political commitment and financing for disaster risk reduction including in the development sectors.

More coherence and better coordination at global and regional levels through joint system planning and prioritized deliverables provide the enabling environment and critical technical support to increase the capacity of nations and communities to address disaster risk more effectively. Thus, ISDR is now seen to be evolving more and more into global system of partnership for disaster risk reduction that will strive to improve coordination and resource mobilization and to ensure achievement of substantial gains in implementing a world-wide disaster risk reduction agenda through concerted efforts by all stakeholders.

2.2 At the core of the strengthening of the ISDR system is the transformation of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction (IATF/DR) into the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GP/DRR). With expanded membership that includes states, international organizations, and civil societies, GP/DRR shall serve as the global forum for disaster reduction and shall provide, in the coming years, strategic guidance and coherence for implementing the HFA, and for sharing experiences and expertise among all its stakeholders. It is set to hold its first meeting from 5 to 7 June 2007.

3. Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction 2007

3.1 The annual Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction has been contributing significantly to building stronger regional processes for disaster reduction in Asia. This year, the Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction (ACDR) 2007 is set to be held in Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan, from 25 to 27 June 2007. Apparently, it will be the first international conference following the first session of the GP/DRR. It will also precede and usher this year's scheduled Ministerial Conference on Disaster Reduction in New Delhi, India, in November 2007. As such, ACDR 2007 is viewed as an important forum for following up on HFA implementation and for promulgating the message of the Global Platform Meeting across the region and to the Ministerial Conference.

3.2 ACDR 2007 shall, among others, endeavor to report and review further the progress made in HFA implementation in the region, recognize best practices and achievements, identify gaps and challenges, and propose the best way forward. Moreover, the conference shall address the relevant topics of governance, education, applying scientific knowledge, public-private partnerships, and community-based disaster risk reduction. ACDR 2007 will provide the participants with a platform to (i) inform on progress on HFA implementation by Asian countries, (ii) present and discuss available guidelines for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction to development

processes, and (iii) inform countries about the new ISDR system and how they could use it to accelerate HFA implementation in Asia.

3.3 The expected outcomes of ACDR 2007 include (i) increased awareness of the need to implement comprehensive, integrated and holistic approaches to disaster risk reduction; (ii) understanding of the need to address the emerging and complex issues such as climate change, environmental degradation, urbanization, and poverty; (iii) sharing of good practices, guidelines, methodologies in education and training, applying scientific knowledge, promoting community-based approaches, and strengthening public-private partnerships in disaster risk reduction; (iv) recognition of the need to address local needs and incorporate a people-centered, bottom-up and top-down approach; (v) familiarity with the new strengthened ISDR system which provides the effective mechanisms to promote collaborative partnerships including national platforms, regional and sub-regional networks and thematic platforms or networks of expertise.

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