

**UNISDR Opening Remarks
Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction (ACDR)
2 October 2017
Baku, Azerbaijan**

Speaker: Mr Timothy Wilcox (UNISDR)

His Excellency Minister Kamaladdin Heydarov,

His Excellency Vice-Minister Mr. Mamoru Maekawa,

Professor Masanori Hamada,

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

- On behalf of UNISDR, I would like to express our sincere appreciation for being invited to deliver remarks at the opening of this important conference.
- I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the *Government of Azerbaijan* for kindly hosting this meeting, the *Government of Japan* for its ongoing cooperation and to the *Asian Disaster Reduction Centre* for its demonstrated long-term commitment to Disaster Risk Reduction. As the focal point for disaster risk reduction in the UN System, UNISDR greatly values the contribution of stakeholders and technical centres such as ADRC towards building the resilience of communities and nations.
- This past year has seen a number of intense natural hazards become major disasters causing billions of dollars in damage and loss and affecting the lives of many people and their families. Not only is the financial cost substantial - which could have been spent more productively elsewhere like in health and education - but the recovery period is often very long, affecting people's livelihoods and eroding any development gains made by countries. These events show us that with the growing effects of a changing climate, we are indeed living in a "new normal" and it emphasizes the urgent need for us to build our resilience so we can prevent more natural hazards from becoming disasters.
- The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction was adopted in 2015 to help direct global efforts in building a more resilient world to these increasing hazards.
- The Central Asia and South Caucasus Region *Plan of Action for Implementation of the Sendai Framework*, outcomes of the *2017 European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction* & the *Asia Regional Plan for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for DRR* are key documents to help achieve the goals of the Sendai Framework and greater resiliency. In particular, they highlight the need to work with other sectors such as civil society, science and academia and private sector to achieve our objectives as building resiliency, which is everyone's business.

- I congratulate the Central Asia and South Caucuses region for establishing and holding its first ever sub-regional platform for DRR in July 2016. Like the larger *European Forum for DRR* and the *Asia Ministerial Conference for DRR*, you will find that these Platforms are not just meetings but excellent opportunities to share ideas, lessons learned, explore ways of working together, and measure progress towards implementation of the Sendai Framework.
- In order to help achieve the Sendai Framework targets, it is important that we work together, share resources, ideas, successes and failures and are inclusive of implementation taking an all hazards approach, and leaving no-one behind.
- Natural hazards and disasters do not respect international boundaries, and as someone once said, “*we are only as strong as our neighbor is*”. Creating partnership among countries or within countries has proven to be conducive and constantly valued. As such, we encourage member states to be as inclusive as possible and include all levels and sectors in building resilience in their countries and in the region.
- It is equally important to adequately measure our progress towards achieving the Sendai goals and targets. By measuring progress, we are also able to demonstrate to the world and to our citizens our successes in risk reduction. We have made a remarkable progress in developing the appropriate mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the Sendai Framework – the monitoring indicators are now fully aligned with those of the Sustainable Development Goals, a data readiness review has been conducted, and the new online monitoring system is scheduled to be formally launched next year.
- We expect substantive discussions through the conference sessions to provide useful inputs to promote the implementation of the Sendai Framework, and in particular through the upcoming *Sub-Regional Platform for the Central Asia and Caucuses* region to be held in Armenia in June 2018, the *European Forum for DRR* to be in Italy in November 2018 and the *8th Asia Ministerial Conference on DRR* to be held in July 2018 in Mongolia. We look forward to welcoming you.
- At this conference, I encourage you to explore new ideas and technologies and, importantly, to champion bold thinking to build a more resilient world in the face of growing climate change. Our world needs more of this bold thinking.

Thank you very much, and I wish us all the best for a successful meeting.