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WORLD CONFERENCE ON DISASTER REDUCTION

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PROPOSED FORMAT OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON DISASTER REDUCTION

Note by the secretariat

The format of the World conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) is proposed in accordance with the UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/58/214 and is based on discussions held at meetings of the Bureau for the Preparatory Committee, as well as with various stakeholders, including the ninth session of the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction (IATF/DR), and in consultation with the Host Government.

I. Introduction

1. When deciding to convene a World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) through resolution A/RES/58/214, the General Assembly invited Member States, all United Nations bodies and specialized agencies and other relevant intergovernmental agencies and organizations, in particular the members of the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction (IATF/DR), to participate actively in the Conference (para. 14), and encouraged effective contributions from major groups (para. 16).

2. The overall format is designed to foster specialized discussions and produce concrete changes and results, and to encourage participation and contributions from various key actors. The WCDR will be composed of three main processes, namely an intergovernmental segment; a thematic segment for knowledge exchange; and a forum for public participation.

3. The Conference will take place in the Portopia Hotel and the adjoining International Conference Center (ICC), Kobe and the Kobe International Exhibition Halls (IEH), in Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture (Japan). The Intergovernmental Segment and the Thematic Segment will be held in the restricted area of the conference premises (Portopia Hotel) and the participation therein requires accreditation and registration, while the Public Forum (ICC and IEH) will be open to the general public.

II. Intergovernmental Segment

4. The Intergovernmental Segment will provide the venue for delegates to conclude the review of the Yokohama Strategy and its Plan of Action, with a view to updating the guiding framework on disaster reduction and identifying elements for a programme of action for disaster reduction in 2005-2015. It will also allow for the identification of priority areas for which Members States will be invited to establish voluntary targets, aimed at ensuring the implementation of relevant provisions of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Millennium Development Goals.

5. The Intergovernmental Segment will allow for statements by delegations, as well as for discussions and negotiations on the outcomes of the Conference for final adoption. In addition to the Plenary Hall (Ohwada Room), a Main Committee Room (Kairaku Room) will be allocated for negotiation and drafting purposes. Rooms will be available to delegations for bilateral and group consultations upon request to the WCDR secretariat. Inter-governmental meetings will have priority over other sessions.

III. Thematic Segment

6. Coordinated by the ISDR secretariat, the Thematic Segment is intended to complement and support the discussions on the programme outcome at the intergovernmental level, with the following particular focuses:

- to exchange experiences and good practices in order to enhance the implementation of the programme outcome in the areas covered by the five themes, as well as to identify issues requiring further discussion at international, regional, national and community levels; and,

- to launch specific initiatives or partnerships to support the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, as well as to facilitate networking and exchange of information between partners and organizations.

7. The Thematic Segment will consist of three High Level Round Tables and a number of thematic sessions clustered under five themes, as well as a Regional Session.

1) High Level Round Tables

8. The High Level Round Tables will address issues identified during the review of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action that require greater political commitment, media visibility and high-level participation. In particular, the identified themes correspond to key challenges and emerging issues of the disaster risk reduction agenda, which require special attention.

9. The three themes addressed by the round tables are:

a) Disaster Risk: The Next Development Challenge

Sustainable development is threatened by increasing disasters. Development practices and investments need to systematically take into account the risk of natural and related hazards. Heads of development programmes and financial institutions, as well as a Government Minister and a Mayor from a major city will provide their views on how to meet this challenge.

b) Learning to Live with Risk

Education, professional training, and the exchange of information are one of the most powerful forces to cut disaster risk. Heads of key international organizations, leading scholars and a Government Minister will discuss what is required, at the start of the decade on education for sustainable development, to expand educational and training processes to develop a broad culture of prevention.

c) Emerging Risks: What Will Tomorrow Hold?

Climate change, deforestation, rapid urbanisation, and spreading diseases are among the many examples of emerging trends that demonstrate the growing consequences of disaster risks. Heads of agencies and leading experts in these fields will consider the implications for decision makers.

10. The three High Level Round Tables will take the form of an open discussion with Governments and partners and are tentatively scheduled in the Plenary Hall on 18 and 19 January 2005. Each round table will be opened by a recognised keynote speaker, short interventions by the panellists, followed by an exchange of views with the Plenary.

2) Thematic Clusters

11. The proposed thematic clusters are directly related to the outcome of the Conference and the issues discussed in the intergovernmental process. They will take place around five themes identified as the priority areas of work for the next ten years through the Review of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action as well as through consultations with partners in preparing for WCDR. The clusters have been formulated in such a manner to fit closely with the five key priority areas that will be subject to discussion at the intergovernmental segment.

12. A thematic panel, with the active participation of key organizations carrying out activities related to the theme and with country representatives, will introduce each of the five themes, setting the tone of the discussion. These five panels will be complemented by thematic sessions, running in parallel, addressing more specific issues under the relevant theme. Government representative(s) are expected to chair the thematic panels. The preparations of the panels will be co-ordinated by lead agencies as follows:

- a) Governance: institutional and policy frameworks for risk reduction:
UNDP, UN-HABITAT, UNV, ProVention Consortium
- b) Risk identification, assessment, monitoring and early warning:
WMO, EC/JRC, UNU
- c) Knowledge management and education: building a culture of resilient communities:
UNESCO, IFRC, UNICEF
- d) Reducing the underlying risk factors:
UNEP, WHO, UNCRD
- e) Preparedness for effective response:
OCHA, WFP

13. Agencies, governments, NGO's and other participants accredited to the WCDR are invited to organise sessions that will contribute to the Thematic Segment under one of the five proposed themes. As interest in the sessions is high and the number of rooms at the venue is limited, partners planning sessions on similar topics are encouraged to collaborate closely and as much as possible, to organise joint sessions. Preference will be given to events that are organized jointly by governmental, non-governmental and intergovernmental partners. The WCDR secretariat will facilitate the collaboration between session organizers. The secretariat will make recommendations to the Bureau for the selection of sessions, on the basis of transparent criteria.

14. The size and the format of each thematic session (panel discussion, presentation, round table, question and answer session) are for the session convenor to decide. The WCDR secretariat will provide information as to the capacity and equipment of the allocated room.

15. The Rapporteur for each thematic panel will draft a report for the Chairperson's feedback to the Plenary. Each thematic session organizer will be requested to provide a short paper on the outcome of the discussion to the Rapporteur, to be integrated in the feedback to the Plenary.

16. It is expected that a separate report will be published, compiling the information (e.g. lessons learned and good practices) shared in the thematic cluster discussions, to serve as a guide for others to learn from past experiences.

3) Regional Session

17. A Regional Session is intended to allow participating countries and agencies in particular those with regional focus, to share experiences and lessons learned from their work in disaster risk reduction. Presentations from each region and cross-regional exchange of views will take place in the Plenary Hall. The session is tentatively scheduled for 21 January 2005. The consolidated programme and format will be prepared by the WCDR secretariat in advance of the Conference and put on the WCDR website.

IV. Public Forum

18. The Public Forum will consist of Workshops, Exhibition booths, Poster Sessions, and an NGO Centre, etc. They provide an opportunity to promote organizations' own activities through poster, video and film sessions and public exhibitions and to engage in open debates, seminars and a variety of events. Organizers may include governments, NGOs, technical institutions, and the private sector. No special status through accreditation will be required to organize such events. Groups wishing to organize events under the Public Forum apply on-line at the WCDR website. This forum will be open to the general public (particularly school and university students) and Conference participants.

19. It will take place in the immediate vicinity of the Conference's intergovernmental and thematic segments, in the International Conference Centre, Kobe and in the Kobe International Exhibition Hall. A detailed programme will be prepared in advance of the Conference and will be available on the WCDR website.
