

**Disaster Risk Reduction at COP19
Warsaw, Poland
11 to 22 November**

Briefing Note

Background

Previous COPs have adopted a number of decisions linking disaster risk reduction to climate change adaptation. These decisions include the [Adaptation Committee](#) and the [Loss and Damage](#) work programme that were detailed in COP 17, in Durban, South Africa as part of the actions envisioned in the [Cancun Adaptation Framework](#), which was adopted in 2010 at COP16. Furthermore, [The Bali Action Plan](#) (under the Ad-hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action under the Convention or [AWG-LCA](#)) and the [Nairobi Work Programme](#) on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change both explicitly considered and supported stronger efforts to reduce the risks of disasters.

COP18 reaffirmed importance of coherence of adaptation actions including in the support provided to developing country parties to build resilience in the context of planning, prioritizing and implementing adaptation actions. At COP18, a decision was taken to explore institutional arrangements to address loss and damage in developing countries that are vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

Evidence

The IPCC Special Report Managing the Risk of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation (SREX)¹ climate related hazards are likely to increase in frequency, intensity, spatial extent and duration as a result of changing climate. The 2013 IPCC Summary of the Physical Science Basis for Climate Change, introduced additional findings related to sea-level rise, extreme temperature and precipitation events and the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and provided further evidence that climate change is altering the face of disaster risk.

Physical hazards are increasing. But, socio-economic factors haven proven to increase our risk dramatically; particularly unplanned urban development, insecure livelihoods and ecosystem decline. These can affect the level of exposure and diminish the resilience of communities. The adverse impacts of climate change on water, agriculture, ecosystems and health are compounding these underlying risk factors.

¹ The IPCC produced in 2012 this special report on extreme events “SREX” highlighting interlinkages between climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Its available on: <http://ipcc-wg2.gov/SREX/>

The UN Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction² (GAR) estimated in 2011 that over 80% of economic losses are attributed to weather-related disasters. In 2013, the GAR shed light on the increasing exposure of public and private assets to disasters.

Thirteen of the most populated cities in the world are coastal trading hubs that are vital in global supply chains. Many of these are exposed to flooding and storms. The estimated exposure of economic assets is expected to increase between 2005 and 2070 from USD416 billion to USD3,513 billion in Miami, USD8 billion to USD544 billion in Dhaka and USD84 billion to USD3,557 billion in Guangzhou (GAR, 2013).

IPCC SREX makes it clear that reducing the risk to disasters is an effective approach to climate change adaptation and identifies areas for joint action. The knowledge and instruments used by Governments to address disaster risk, contribute immediately to capacities to adapt to climate change. Approaches that integrate disaster risk and climate change concerns into public policy and public and private economic investment decisions are fundamental in this regard.

Overall messages on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction

- *While mortality rates from weather and climate related disasters are decreasing globally, economic losses are rising exponentially.* Economic losses now regularly exceed \$100 billion annually and are projected to double by 2030. Since 1980, risk of economic loss due to floods has increased by over 160 percent and to tropical cyclones by 265 percent in OECD countries. Economic loss risk to floods and cyclones in the OECD is growing faster than GDP per capita. The risk of losing wealth in weather-related disasters is now exceeding the rate at which the wealth itself is being created.
- *Climate change is both a driver and multiplier of disaster risk.* The character and severity of impacts from climate-related extremes is inter-related with increasing exposure and vulnerability to hazards. Climate change has affected the magnitude and frequency of some extreme weather and climate events in some regions already. Climate change will have significant impacts on the severity and magnitude of climate extremes in the future.
- *Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation are two-sides of the same coin.* Climate change can impact both the intensity/frequency of natural hazards and the vulnerability of communities to disasters. The close links between disaster risk and climate change impacts, therefore, require an integrated approach to yield co-benefits.
- *Integrating disaster risk reduction into investment decisions is the most cost effective way to reduce risk.* Between 70 to 85 percent of all new investment is generated

² The UN Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction is a biennial report of the United Nations coordinated and produced by the UNISDR. More information on <http://www.preventionweb.net/english/hyogo/gar/>

from the private sector. Currently, institutional investors manage assets worth more than \$80 trillion globally, much of it with limited consideration to disaster risk. In the years ahead, trillions of dollars will be invested in hazard-exposed regions. If these investments fail to take into account natural hazards and vulnerabilities – as they largely do now – risk will continue to accelerate.

- *The scope and nature of disaster and climate risks are so broad-ranging that no single actor or institution can address them all.* Because there are many drivers or causes of risk from climate change to urbanization, environmental degradation and poverty requires a comprehensive approach includes all actors from national and local governments, civil society and the private sector. New York city's 'PlanNYC', which brings together over 25 city agencies, is an example where a comprehensive, long-term approach to prepare the city for one million more residents, strengthen its economy, combat climate change, and enhance the quality of life for inhabitants under an integrated strategic plan.

Disaster risk reduction messages specific to COP19

1. Institutional Mechanisms for Loss and Damages

Urge that the proposal of an institutional mechanism for loss and damages build on existing capacities and initiatives globally, regionally and nationally and promote local and national owned disaster loss data and related risk assessments to support planning and prioritization of adaptation actions.

Rationale

Many countries are establishing national disaster loss accounting systems that capture historical human, infrastructure and economic losses and damages of disasters. Such databases are considered initial step towards risk assessment and planning for disaster risk management.

In COP18 – and in the context of the work programme on loss and damage - parties requested a technical paper on gaps in existing institutional arrangements within and outside of the Convention to address loss and damage, including those related to slow onset events.³ It is expected that COP19 in Warsaw will recommend (and possibly endorse) the establishment of international institutional mechanism/arrangement on loss and damage.

2. National Adaptation Plans

a) Urge LDCs and their partners supporting National Adaptation Plans to include risk assessments (based on disaster loss data) in the earliest phases.

b) Recognize that there are national and local institutions engaged in the implementation of the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disaster* with expertise and functioning

³ Slow onset events, as identified in decision 1/CP.16, include: sea level rise, increasing temperatures, ocean acidification, glacial retreat and related impacts, salinization, land and forest degradation, loss of biodiversity and desertification.

effective mechanisms to address the risk of natural hazards in national and local development planning.

Rationale

Development of national adaptation plans (NAPs) are important instruments for addressing climate change and disaster risk in sustainable development planning nationally and locally. NAP Guidelines endorsed in COP18, highlight the value of integrating disaster risk reduction capacities and tools, in national adaptation planning processes.

3. Adaptation Committee

a) Urge that the Adaptation Committee establishes closer links to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation including the *Hyogo Framework for Action* and its future arrangements post-2015.

b) Emphasize the importance of coordination of activities under Nairobi Work Programme and those planned by the Adaptation Committee in order to maximize contributions by adaptation partners. Joint activities will facilitate more effective support to LDCs and developing countries.

c) Support the Annual Adaptation Forum to be launched in Warsaw COP19 and plans for focusing on adaptation for building resilience and investing in a safer future.

Rationale

The Adaptation Committee can further strengthen the linkages between climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction and demonstrate integrated approaches. The Adaptation Committee is considering establishing closer linkages with the network of the Nairobi Work Programme comprised of over 270 organizations. COP19 is expected to address proposals in that regard.

Disaster Risk Reduction related events at COP 19

- *Tuesday 12 November, 1315 – 1445 hrs.* “Building resilience and reducing risk in a changing climate” hosted by the Government of Australia, the Nature Conservancy and UNISDR.
- *Monday 19 November, 1830 – 2000 hrs.* “Build resilience and reduce climate risks to support NAPs – with focus on Food Security, Health and Disaster Risk Reduction” convened by WHO, IFAD, UNISDR, CBD and WMO.

30 October 2013