

**Remarks by Mr. Robert Glasser, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, at the “General discussion on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction and climate change” of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**

29 February 2016 from 10:00 to 13:00  
Conference room XVI, Palais des Nations, Geneva

Excellencies, distinguished members of the Committee, Ms Hayashi and Ms Haidar, guest speakers, representatives of the civil society, UN colleagues,

It is a privilege for me to address the opening of the general discussion on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction and climate change of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Margareta Wahlström, my predecessor as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, who is with us for today’s discussion. Margareta, without your tireless work, we would not be where we are on gender and disaster risk reduction.

This discussion is very timely as it comes right after the adoption of the Paris Agreement and close to the first anniversary of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

The Sendai Framework marks an important paradigm shift from managing disasters to managing risk and to address the underlying causes and drivers of disasters, which lie in ill-conceived development policies, practices and investments.

Stocktaking on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action based on countries’ reports has pointed to gaps and shortcomings in gender equality in disaster risk management, such as participation in decision making, in resource management, access to social protection measures, education, and health as well as access to early warning. Women are greatly affected by disasters, and more precise information and disaggregated data on the impact of disasters are needed to take better correction measures. Furthermore, climate change exacerbates weather-related hazards and at least ninety per cent of disasters are linked to natural hazards.

In recognition of the need to do more and address the gaps, the Sendai Framework places significant importance on human rights, gender equality and climate change adaptation. In particular, in its guiding principles it affirms that:

- “Each State has the primary responsibility to prevent and reduce disaster risk”;
- “Managing the risk of disasters is aimed at protecting persons..., while promoting and protecting all human rights,...”;
- “Disaster risk reduction requires an all-of-society engagement and partnership... the empowerment and inclusive, accessible and non-discriminatory participation...”;
- “A gender...perspective should be integrated in all policies and practices, and women... leadership should be promoted”.

I might add that climate change is perhaps the single most significant driver of risk, and reducing greenhouse gases the single most important risk reduction measure.

Furthermore, the Sendai Framework calls on countries to strengthen their normative frameworks and accountability in disaster risk management.

It also calls on treaty bodies to support its implementation in coordination with other instruments, such as the CEDAW.

There is an intrinsic connection between disaster risk reduction and human rights.

The application of the human rights standards can strengthen disaster risk management. The promotion and protection of all human rights, civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights, elimination of racial discrimination and discrimination against women, children and persons with disabilities' rights, to mention just a few, have a direct bearing on participation, equality, capabilities, vulnerabilities, resilience, possibility of taking risk-informed decision, accountability, etc. and thus on the causes of risk, and disaster risk reduction.

At the same time, preventing and reducing disaster risk are in, and of, themselves means to protect and promote human rights by protecting peoples' life and their livelihood. The Sendai Framework principles require that in taking all the necessary measures to prevent and reduce disaster risk, states and all other stakeholders promote and protect all human rights.

The work of the Committee through its future general recommendation on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction and climate change and its concluding observations will provide an important catalyst for action. Your initiative is great example of how cross-cutting agendas, like human rights, gender equality and disaster risk reduction can be mutually supportive and taken forward together.

In concluding, I would like to thank you for this important initiative and commend the leadership of Ms Hayashi and Ms Haidar in taking it forward as well as the Government of Japan for its continued and strong support for the topic.

Thank you