

**Official Statement**

**By Mr. Elhadj As Sy, Secretary General of the IFRC**

**Geneva, 16 May 2019**

Mr. Chair, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me, first of all, to thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) at this Sixth Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The past two years since the fifth session of the Global Platform in Cancun have been marked by all stakeholders’ increased efforts for the implementation of the Sendai Framework for DRR and, in particular, for the achievement of Target E by 2020. IFRC and its member National Societies have actively engaged in national and regional DRR platforms and contributed to the implementation of the Sendai Framework by scaling up our work for DRR.

DRR is one of our core areas of work. Our strength is our presence in, and knowledge of local communities, as well as having an auxiliary role towards national governments. Our volunteers live in the communities they serve, and are present there before, during and after a crisis. They are the first responders and have the greatest motivation in helping their community recover, because they are the affected people themselves.

Our DRR work has continuously increased over the years. Our outreach and investment have more than quadrupled since 2009. In 2018, IFRC and National Societies invested a total of 207 million Swiss francs on DRR projects and reached 52 million people in 160 countries. Our DRR projects also prove very cost effective. Our cost benefit analysis studies show that every dollar we spend on DRR saves on average US$16 in return.

Creating a culture of prevention and resilience is a key objective of our work and we have the potential to reach further through our National Societies’ engagement in the educational sector. We see education as a learning process enabling individuals to develop the knowledge, skills and values needed for their personal, social and professional development, thereby making them live in dignity, build their resilience and achieve their potential.

In a changing climate, with increased risks of extreme weather and disasters, people need to have a greater awareness of the risks they face and what they can do to be prepared. In 2018, IFRC and the Save the Children published the second edition of the *“Public Awareness and Public Education for Disaster Risk Reduction: Action-oriented key messages for households and schools”*, which supports communities to build their knowledge-base and put in place their own measures to stay safe. In accordance with our Strategic Framework on Education 2020-2030, we will further enhance the Red Cross and Red Crescent engagement and contribution in ensuring safe, continuous and equitable access to education opportunities.

Mr. Chair,

Despite the progress made since the last Global Platform, multiple challenges lie ahead in our efforts to implement the Sendai Framework. Disasters, exacerbated by climate change, are increasing in number, intensity, scale and complexity and so are the number of people exposed to hazards. To build a safe, resilient world, therefore, we need to move from responding to disasters to building the capacity to anticipate, absorb and adapt to disasters, in other words, building resilience at all levels.

To this end, IFRC calls for increased attention and action by all stakeholders in the following areas:

**1) We must prioritize the most vulnerable people**.

This requires:

* **A better programmatic approach**: We need to get better at collecting and using data, and ensuring this data is sex, age and disability disaggregated, and includes an analysis of risks and impacts of displacement. Our response needs to be inclusive of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, including older persons, disabled persons, migrants and displaced people. We should take collective action to prevent displacement and to prepare to address displacement where it does occur.
* **Effective regulatory frameworks:** Governments need to ensure that disaster and climate laws, policies and plans, including Disaster Risk Management Acts, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), include a focus on reducing risks for the most vulnerable people. Global policy discussions, including at the Global Climate Summit, need to promote an approach that prioritizes the most at-risk and the most vulnerable.
* **Investment:** Donors need to ensure systems and financing conditions are designed so that funds can and do reach most vulnerable and at-risk countries and communities. Donors and governments need to scale up support for climate-smart DRR programming that prioritizes these most vulnerable communities and individuals.

Community-based solutions focused on the most vulnerable people are at the forefront of RCRC action. National RCRC Societies commit to undertake assessments of community-level risk and vulnerability where we work and to scale up support to local, community-based climate-smart DRR measures that build community resilience and reduce the impact of future disasters.

**2)**  **We need to ensure global commitments translate into local action and impact.**

This requires:

* **A better programmatic approach:** We need to work with, and through, local organisations and support the institutional capacities of local actors, including local government authorities, CSOs and branches of National RCRC Societies, which have direct reach to communities. Much DRR and CCA programming is still based on a project-based model. We need a new mind-set that focuses more on accompanying, enabling and connecting communities as they grapple with complex challenges. Individuals and communities must be supported to understand their own risks, including those within the landscape, to take action and participate in official decision-making processes.
* **Effective regulatory frameworks:** Laws, policies and plans should enable local action and request community participation in decision-making forums. National RCRC Societies and other local and national organizations are key partners for resilience strengthening. They should be invited to participate in programming and decision-making, including in the development and implementation of National Adaptation Plans and national and local DRR strategies. Global policy discussions, including the Global Climate Summit, need to recognize the value of local level actors and action.
* **Investment:** A greater proportion of international and domestic funds needs to be allocated to sub-national and local-level efforts to enhance resilience. This will allow local authorities and communities to implement locally-appropriate solutions, ultimately making best use of available resources.

We pledge to scale up our work with authorities to promote national investments, law and policies that consider local needs and provide an enabling environment to build resilience. We commit to accompany those most at-risk to disaster and climate change and ensure locally-owned actions are informed by global best practice.

We also call on partners to join us in these efforts and become part of the 1 Billion Coalition for Resilience - an alliance that IFRC is building with partners across the world to help build the culture of engagement for resilience-building activities. We offer our network of local branches and community-based volunteers as a platform to engage with local communities to develop locally-led climate smart DRR strategies.

**3)**  **We need to strengthen early warning to enable early action by at-risk communities.**

This requires:

* **A better programmatic approach:** All stakeholders need to work together to scale up systems for early warning/early action and preparedness for response, particularly to ensure at-risk communities are equipped to take action ahead of impact. National and local governments and communities need to develop forecast-based early action plans and financing mechanisms that are embedded within disaster risk reduction strategies. All actors should improve support to at-risk communities to take early action before a disaster strikes based on these weather and climate forecasts.
* **Effective policy and regulatory frameworks:** Governments need to comprehensively address the regulation and facilitation of international disaster response (IDRL) in to better facilitate effective early action. Global policy discussions, including at the Global Climate Summit, need to focus on scaling up early warning and early action at the community level.
* **Investment:** Donors and governments should increase investment in early warning systems that serve the most at-risk communities, in particular, the most poor, marginalized and vulnerable. Donors need to increase flexible investments for climate-smart DRR, in particular, through greater funding to local actors. Governments and donors need to increase investment in risk financing, such as forecast-based financing and other good solutions.

We pledge to enhance our EWEA work together with communities and governments, including through strengthened partnerships with national hydro-meteorological services and national disaster management agencies. We commit to continue operationalizing and advocating for innovative approaches, such as Forecast-based Action and Financing, and its institutionalisation into laws, policies and plans.

**4)**  **We need to adopt an integrated approach to DRR and CCA:**

This requires:

* **A better programmatic approach:** Climate change institutions need to work together with disaster risk management and humanitarian institutions at all levels to effectively address rising climate and disaster risks. Local and national governments and other development/humanitarian actors need to ensure that risk reduction and preparedness measures take into account the latest climate science. Development projects need to be risk-informed, considering and addressing risks associated with disasters and climate change.
* **Effective policy regulatory frameworks:** Governments need to ensure an integrated holistic approach to development, CCA and DRR in laws, policies and plans.
* **Investment:** Donors also need to adopt a holistic approach to DRR, CCA and development support.

An increasing portion of RCRC DRR programmes are already climate-smart. As of 2018, 72% of our DRR programmes considered climate risks, including 23% of which took active measures to adapt to climate change, but we aim to improve on this. IFRC commits to scale up support to development of national regulatory frameworks for climate-smart DRR that meets the needs of the most vulnerable and engages local communities.

Through my role as Commissioner on the Global Commission on Adaptation we will also seek to bring greater coherence between adaptation and disaster risk management agendas, and generate new levels of commitment to preventing extreme weather events from becoming disasters. At the same time, we hope to see greater connections made between the climate and disaster risk reduction communities at the global level, in particular with outcomes of this Global Platform being taken forward and supported through the United Nations Secretary General’s Climate Summit in September this year.

Mr. Chair,

Statements of intent at the end of the day will not give us lasting credibility with the people who need our support. We must all hold each other fully accountable for acting upon the commitments we shall be making during this Global Platform.

Through our network of 191 National Societies, 160,000 local branches and 14 million community-based volunteers reaching tens of millions of people through disaster preparedness, risk reduction and development programmes, IFRC remains committed to supporting the implementation of the Sendai Framework, and contributing to transform global commitments into local action.

We will continue to partner with governments, civil society organizations, private sector and other stakeholders, to reach more people in DRR and help them strengthen their resilience.

Thank you all, and I wish you all a successful Global Platform.