

Press release

14 May 2013 - UNISDR 2013/14

UK GOVERNMENT WELCOMES FIRST-EVER HFA PEER REVIEW

14 May 2013, BRUSSELS – The UK has become the first country to undergo a peer review to assess its progress in implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), the world's first comprehensive agreement on disaster risk reduction, adopted in 2005 following the Indian Ocean tsunami.

Accepting the report today, Chloe Smith, the UK Minister for Political and Constitutional Reform, said: "I am proud and delighted to receive this report on behalf of the UK Government. Thank you to the Peer Review Team for all their hard work, and to the UN, EC and OECD for all their support. The UK was the first country to undertake this Peer Review process and we look forward to assisting in developing it more widely in the future. We will study its recommendations carefully, and respond accordingly in due course. We hope others will follow our example and have their efforts at implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action reviewed by their peers."

The review confirmed that the UK has achieved a high level of preparedness at both national and local level to respond to natural hazards and that it is continuing to build the resilience of society to mitigate the impact of disaster events. It said the UK authorities "at all levels have an understanding of the medium-term risks that they face as well as the ability to identify emerging risks over the shorter and medium-long terms".

While also praising the UK's focus on business-continuity issues and partnerships with the private sector as well as its establishment of multi-agency local resilience forums to minimize damage caused by natural hazards, the review recommended the UK authorities to shift emphasis from a reactive disaster management focus to a more pro-active risk reduction approach, in line with the priority action areas of the HFA.

Conducted by a seven-member team from Finland, Italy, Sweden, the European Commission, OECD and UNISDR, the review involved interviews with some 90 people from 45 entities including government departments, NGOs and businesses conducted across the UK from 16 to 26 September, 2012.

Paola Albrito, Head of UNISDR's Europe office, said: "The HFA peer review has provided an opportunity for the reviewing countries to learn about key issues in the UK that are helping to build disaster resilience. The experience of this valuable European effort to reduce vulnerability

to disasters will also contribute to ongoing consultations on the shape and direction of the HFA2 which will be agreed in 2015.”

European Commission representative Ian Clark said: “The European Commission is delighted that the UK volunteered to pilot this initiative and supports the wider use of this governance tool at European and international level. The successful UK pilot peer review project demonstrates the benefits of sharing good practices between countries and the potential to improve national and European policy-making in disaster risk management. The Commission is strongly committed to further promote and support peer reviews within the context of EU cooperation on disaster management. This will help steer progress in critical areas in our cooperation such as risk assessment and risk management practices whilst fostering wider policy dialogue.”

OECD representative, Charles Baubion, said: “The UK showed throughout this review its capacities as a leading country in risk management, which can inspire other OECD countries and beyond to adopt innovative approaches in risk assessment, business continuity and risk governance. The all-hazards approach is well aligned to best practices promoted at the G20 level, and is a key reference for OECD best practice.”

The review report will also be presented at the EU Civil Protection Forum in Brussels on the 16 May 2013 and to the Fourth Session of UNISDR’s biennial Global Platform for Disaster Reduction set to take place on 21-23 May 2013 in Geneva, Switzerland.

The UK volunteered to undergo the peer review and more countries are expected to follow suit as the importance of building disaster resilience gathers momentum worldwide. Finland has volunteered to be the next European country to be peer reviewed in 2013.