

**Joint statement of the UN Regional Coordination Mechanism
Thematic Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience (TWG-DR3)
To be delivered at the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction 2018
4 July 2018; Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia**

(Time allocation for each statement: 5 minutes between 700 and 850 words)

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I have the pleasure of delivering a statement on behalf of the United Nations agencies, programmes and funds of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism – or RCM as it's better known. The RCM comprises the 35 UN entities working together on disaster risk reduction and resilience through a dedicated Thematic Working Group (TWGDR3).

I begin by expressing our sincere gratitude to the Government of Mongolia for graciously hosting us at this 2018 Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR), being organized jointly with the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction - it's a demonstration of Mongolia's stewardship and commitment to disaster risk reduction and building the resilience of vulnerable communities across Mongolia – and the wider region – to improve the lot of those most at risk and protect sustainable development gains.

On our part, I wish to put forward five commitments:

First, is our commitment to *promote coherent and coordinated UN action to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

The *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2017* clearly shows how disaster risk is outpacing resilience in Asia-Pacific, with disproportionate impacts on those living in poverty, especially women and girls living in poverty. Our RCM TWG's work is guided by the mandate of ensuring coherent and coordinated UN support from global to regional to subregional and national levels across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Sendai Framework, and other key global development frameworks and international human rights instruments.

For example, we work together to follow up and review the 2030 Agenda through the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). At the Fifth APFSD, the RCM Thematic Working Group led the roundtable on Sustainable Development Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and contributed to several recommendations that sought to strengthen policy coherence across government institutions for accelerated progress towards Goal 11.

Second is our commitment to develop coherence in knowledge products to support policy makers. In the last two years, we have produced knowledge products to help support our region's decision makers, including on how to respond to the multiple global and regional agendas promoting disaster risk reduction in the context of sustainable development. Our work on the 2015-2016 El Niño Event in Asia and the Pacific is an example of how we have built the scientific knowledge base for a timely and risk-informed regional response to El Niño and other slow-onset disasters. Another example is the *Disaster Response in Asia and the Pacific: A Guide to International Tools and Services*, the second edition of which was launched earlier this morning here at the AMCDRR.

Likewise, over the next year, in recognition of the fact that damage and loss to infrastructure can reach 66 per cent, the RCM TWG will undertake a joint study on building resilient infrastructure, including health systems, water sanitation and education facilities. It highlights risk assessment methodologies for infrastructure, financing mechanisms, innovative technologies and design methods, together with infrastructure management systems.

Third, we will deepen our engagement with subregional organizations "as one UN" to promote more effective support for communities throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Our work with ASEAN is a case in point. We are now on the third iteration of the *Joint Strategic Plan of Action on Disaster Management for 2016-2020*, under the rubric of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER). The Joint Plan represents a best practice for both institutions, as does the related implementation and monitoring mechanisms put in place through the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management, its Working Groups, and the UN RCM Thematic Working Group. And this work, including key commitments to increasing the engagement of women and girls, youth, and migrants in DRR, will be further scaled up in response to the *Declaration on the Culture of Prevention* by ASEAN in 2017 particularly in areas of resilience for sustainable development, aligning poverty reduction and disaster risk management, together with principled humanitarian action.

We would invite other sub-regional groups -- such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC -- to consider the benefit of such an approach, focusing on areas where the UN can add further value.

Fourth, we commit to bridge data gaps to promote coherence: The Sendai Framework Data Readiness Review reports that data are typically available for physical damage and human impacts but less so for sector-specific economic losses. Such data-related challenges are hindering the capacity of countries to meaningfully monitor, measure and manage disaster risk and losses. We commit to multiply our efforts to address data capacity needs, including for collection and use of sex, age, and disability disaggregated data, by creating common methodologies and standards, data sharing platforms

including new cloud based metadata platforms to enhance data accessibility and applicability. We will also capitalize on new sources of disaster data, including from earth observation satellites, social media, crowdsourcing, big data, drone surveys and other sources, and work with UN Member States to find coherence in a more diverse and comprehensive information environment.

Fifth, we will jointly promote people-centered approach to DRR, embedded in the principle of leaving no one behind, in line with 2030 Agenda. We all know disasters affect different people differently. For instance, more women die from complications related to pregnancy and childbirth and experience gender-based violence during disasters, due to lack of risk mitigation and preparedness measures in place to minimize their vulnerabilities. We will further strengthen the emphasis on enhancing capacities, strengthening livelihood and resilience of those who are most marginalized - the poor, women, children and those living with disability - which is critical to reducing disaster risks, reducing poverty, strengthening health systems and promoting gender and social equality. Women and youth have untapped potentials to be change agents for promoting DRR and resilient communities. Without meaningful participation and leadership of the affected communities, achieving Sendai commitments will not be possible.

Excellencies,

As the UN family working at the Asia-Pacific level, we are responding to the clear call of the Sendai Framework for a stronger engagement by the UN in DRR and resilience. And we are doing so within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in line with the *UN Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience*. We are committed to utilizing the UN's capacities to effectively support Member States and other stakeholders in advancing progress in the Sendai targets and the SDGs. They require greater attention, and we will focus on areas where UN comparative advantages can be leveraged.

As the UN Secretary-General said, "people do not experience problems and crises in silos." Therefore, the United Nations "delivering as one" approach is particularly suited for delivering on cross-cutting issues such as gender and resilience-building, and the RCM will continue to promote the coherent and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of this Conference, with the objective of reaching those furthest behind.

I thank you.
