



## **WHO STATEMENT TO THE 2017 GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

Chair, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address the 2017 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction on behalf of the World Health Organization.

By agreeing to the inclusion of 38 references to health in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, Member States of the United Nations have put people's health at the centre of community, national and global disaster risk management policy and practice for the next 15 years. There is now a collective challenge and imperative for countries and communities, supported by international organizations including WHO and development cooperation partners, to ensure that the Sendai Framework commitments to improving health outcomes for people at risk of emergencies and disasters are converted into action. National and local strategies for disaster risk reduction must increase support to people's health-centred action by all sectors as part of the all-hazards multisectoral approach to Sendai Framework implementation at all levels.

WHO, as the United Nations specialized agency for health, has recently established the WHO Health Emergencies Programme (WHE) to help countries, and to coordinate international action, to prevent, prepare for, detect, rapidly respond to, and recover from outbreaks and emergencies. WHE, a single programme across all levels of WHO, is leading WHO's efforts on the implementation of the Sendai Framework and the United Nations System Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience while working with partners on establishing joint action across the health-related Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement on climate change and other international instruments such as the International Health Regulations (2005).

WHO registers our appreciation to the Government of Mexico for hosting the 2017 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. Mexico's health authorities, working closely with the National Directorate of Civil Protection, are world leaders in health disaster risk management, in particular the Safe Hospitals Initiative. Mexico City's devastating 1985 earthquake, in which some 10 000 people including 561 people in Juarez Hospital alone and some 6000 hospital beds were lost, prompted the Ministers of Health of the Americas to establish strategies on Disaster Risk Reduction in Health. Mexico has applied the Safe Hospitals principles to the protection of other infrastructure, including schools, transport and hotels.

Member States of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Americas Region of WHO have been at the forefront of multisectoral action on disaster risk reduction since 1985. PAHO have maintained a programme of work, marked by strong collaboration across the region, that has focused on building capacities of countries to reduce the health risks of disasters. At this Global Platform, Health Delegates of PAHO Member States work to identify opportunities for cooperation between countries and establish recommendations for the implementation of the Regional Plan of Action for Disaster Risk Reduction 2016-2021 that was approved by PAHO's Directing Council in 2016.

Lessons from disasters, such as the Ebola outbreak in Western Africa, Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, Nepal earthquake and many more, have demonstrated that local and national capacities are most critical for preventing, preparing, responding and recovering from emergencies and disasters. WHO is strengthening its country-level presence to scale up support to building of national capacities and response to emergencies, particularly in high risk countries. WHO is translating its global and regional health emergency and disaster risk management frameworks into action, for example, through support to independent evaluations of IHR capacities, national planning and core capacity building, strengthening country operational readiness, implementation of the Safe Hospitals Initiative linked to the safety, sustainability and security of health facilities, technical assistance to Sendai Framework targets and indicators, and building the resilience of health systems. WHO's technical departments are also taking action, for example, by including emergencies in Rehabilitation 2030: A Call for Action and a new initiative linking mental health and disaster risk management. The innovative Smart Hospitals initiative in the Caribbean countries adopts measures to address disaster risk reduction and climate change through both adaptation and mitigation in integrated health services networks,

Our way forward must be collaborative. WHO values its partnership with UN agencies and other partners as a member of the UN Senior Leadership for Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience, the Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (CADRI) Partnership and other regional and global networks. The recent development of WHO Thematic Platform for Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management Research Group brings together representatives of Member States and academia who are committed to strengthening the evidence base for health policy and practice.

WHO can assure this community that we will continue to support and expand our collaboration with many partners to strengthen country and community capacities for health emergency and disaster risk management. The Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction provides a great opportunity to take action on the Sendai Framework to protect every societies' most precious asset – our people.

**26 May 2017, Cancun**