On Tuesday, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon opened the Third Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), which is being attended by approximately 3,000 participants, including representatives from over 170 governments, 20 ministers and 30 mayors, and 100 non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Throughout the day, participants met in high-level plenary sessions, roundtables on preparedness, nuclear emergencies, local action and wildfire risk, as well as a dialogue with parliamentarians and mayors and a briefing on the 2011 Global Assessment Report.

**BRIEF HISTORY**

Building on previous sessions, the Third Session of the Global Platform is being organized around the overall theme: **Invest Today for a Safer Tomorrow – Increased Investment in Local Action.** As the primary multistakeholder forum for all parties involved in DRR, the Global Platform is an opportunity for leaders, decision-makers, practitioners and experts to share their experiences, commit to action and further guide the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) system. The Session was preceded by two days of preparatory meetings and a key feature of this year’s Global Platform will be the World Reconstruction Conference.

IISD Reporting Services (IISD RS) will be reporting on a selection of the proceedings from the Global Platform.

**OPENING CEREMONY**

During the opening ceremony, chaired by UN Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro, Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General, called for accelerating efforts in building resilience and a “coalition for action” for DRR. In a video message, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who received UNISDR’s Global Champion for Disaster Award, emphasized the importance of having a culture of safety and responsibility is critical. Educating and preparing individuals to promote individual resilience and a “coalition for action” for DRR. In a video message, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who received UNISDR’s Global Champion for Disaster Award, emphasized the importance of having a culture of safety and responsibility is critical.

Peter Maurer, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Swiss Confederation, highlighted Switzerland’s role in providing support for DRR. John Carter, Minister for Civil Defence, New Zealand, said expertise and technical and financial support are also needed. While local authority capacities are important, additional state involvement is critical.

**PLENARY: INVEST TODAY FOR A SAFER TOMORROW – INCREASED INVESTMENT IN LOCAL ACTION**

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon outlined important steps, including: conducting risk assessments of critical infrastructure; raising awareness; and developing broader coalitions of action that include local government and communities. Moderating the session, Zeinab Badawi, BBC Journalist, recalled her own experiences with disaster mitigation and reduction from northern Sudan. Prema Gopalan, Executive Director, Swayam Shikshan Prayog, said local communities have the capacity to handle risks and build resilience. Marcelo Luis Ebrard Casaubón, Mayor of Mexico City, noted that while local authority capacities are important, additional expertise and technical and financial support are also needed. John Carter, Minister for Civil Defence, New Zealand, said educating and preparing individuals to promote individual responsibility is critical.

Badawi asked panelists how to ensure local-level action, with Luo Pingfei, Vice Minister, Ministry of Civil Defence, China, highlighting the importance of public awareness.
and coordination between central and local government to realize synergies. Abdou Sane, Member of Parliament, Senegal, favored integrated approaches and developing a risk prevention culture. Robert Glasser, Secretary General, CARE International, emphasized the challenges to integrate risk reduction policies within the wider development framework. Several panelists underlined the importance to tailor DRR mechanisms and activities to local needs.

Sandra Wu, President and CEO, Kokusai Kogyo, Japan, recommended leveraging the expertise of the private sector to engage responsibly in DRR. Gopalan said grassroots women’s groups are critical for raising local communities’ awareness of risk. Casaubón said national funds are insufficient, calling for global funding initiatives. Sane noted the need for political will to allocate financial resources.

**Plenary Statements**

Masuku Themby Nhlanganiso, Deputy Prime Minister, Swaziland, noted a number of undertakings to align Swaziland’s policies with the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), including: establishing a disaster management centre; creating a centre for emergency preparedness; and incorporating DRR into school curricula. Seri Mohamed Nazri bin Tan Sri Abdul Aziz, Minister at the Prime Minister Department, Malaysia, said that incorporating DRR into the country’s development plans has encouraged civil society participation. Ahmed Zaki, Deputy Minister of Housing and Environment, Maldives, outlined recent DRR activities: preparing a disaster and climate risk profile; improving prevention culture. Robert Glasser, Secretary General, CARE International, emphasized the need to mainstream DRR at sectoral and local levels. Toni Frisch, Head, Humanitarian Aid Department, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, said DRR preparedness is an integral part of the development agenda, and called for increased investment in risk prevention and preparedness.

Several panelists underlined the importance to tailor DRR reduction policies within the wider development framework. Vicente Núñez, Director, National Emergency Office, Costa Rica, emphasized the strengthening of scientific approaches and promoting multidisciplinarity within DRR.

**Roundtables**

***Nuclear Emergencies***: Ban Ki-moon opened the roundtable discussion on strengthening national and international preparedness for nuclear and technological emergencies. He said that the recent accident at Japan’s Fukushima nuclear plant exposed gaps in how a country and the international system deal with safety breaches, and that more needs to be done to address the nexus between natural disasters and nuclear safety. The UN Secretary-General announced a high-level meeting on the issue, scheduled for 22 September 2011 during the UN General Assembly.

Session moderator Rashid Khalikov, Director, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), said that the international community needs to work together to reduce the impact of nuclear disasters, particularly through consolidating response systems, integrating environmental risks in preparedness activities and ensuring accurate communications following an accident.
Kenichi Suganuma, Deputee Permanent Representative of Japan to the UN, Geneva, briefed participants on the current situation at the Fukushima nuclear plant, stressing that the government was doing its utmost to move from the emergency response phase to the stabilization action phase, and that outcomes of an investigation into the accident will be shared with the international community to contribute to better global safety standards. Yuri Brazhnikov, Head, Russian National Emergency Response Corps., said that past nuclear accidents, including Chernobyl, should serve as the basis for preparedness and that multilateral mechanisms should be put in place to respond quickly when the next accident occurs. Laurent Michel called for better coordination between countries, improved exchange of information and best crisis management practices to ensure high safety levels. Margareta Wahlström, UN Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, asked participants to think about how to improve safety and investments, and to involve the private sector, especially as they are often owners and managers of such risk-prone facilities as nuclear plants.

PREPAREDNESS: David Nabarro, Senior UN System Coordinator for Avian and Human Influenza, chaired the roundtable. Christine Marin, Member of Parliament, France, favored linking political, financial, and aid networks. Vicente Núñez outlined national preparedness initiatives, stressing the importance of integrating disaster response planning into the government’s agenda. Drawing on lessons from recent years, Rashid Khalikov, OCHA, said building and sustaining preparedness capacity is essential, and noted that more funding is being allocated to preparedness activities. Geoffrey Love, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), emphasized the importance of adapting a multi-hazard approach, building relationships in advance and working with the media. Bruce Aylward, World Health Organization (WHO), recommended an all-society approach, and said lessons learned need to be incorporated into policy, programming, and practice. Ronald Waldman, USAID, outlined experiences on business continuity planning, simulation exercises, and private sector preparedness.

In the ensuing discussion, one participant said that tools developed by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency to support coordination of a certain disaster response have proved to be generic. Another participant outlined funding mechanisms for preparedness in India, stressing the need for preparedness indicators. Some favored integrating preparedness activities into sustainable development programmes and involving all stakeholders, while others highlighted the importance of scientific knowledge, mitigation plans, and the implementation of simplified customs regulations. One participant noted that preparedness activities have net benefits in the present and called for further organizational innovations, while another underlined the merits to simulation exercises and strengthened institutional preparedness.

LOCAL ACTION: Andrew Bidnell, Global Network of Civil Society Organizations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR), moderated the roundtable on ensuring a return on investment in local action. Marcus Oxley, GNDR, said reducing disaster loss requires local risk governance and enabling return on investments, highlighting as critical issues: transparency and accountability; inclusion and participation; and local capability. Hayde Rodriguez, President, Union of Cooperatives of Las Brumas, Nicaragua, described frameworks for organizing local women groups and grassroots organizations for resilience building, emphasizing programmes to qualify local women’s capacity for creating community risk maps.

Keith Hinds, Mayor of Portmore, Jamaica, said local governments should act as developer of the local economy, suggesting housing and school development as areas to align local risk reduction with investor returns through public-private partnerships or innovative funding mechanisms.

Abdou Sane, Member of Parliament, Senegal, described progress that his country has made in developing a culture of risk prevention, highlighting: national priority setting for resource distribution; a local authorities network; awareness raising on risks and responses; and improvement of risk communication. David Cadman, President, ICLEI-Local governments for sustainability, said more than 3,500 cities have formulated climate protection strategies but can only make a difference within appropriate national frameworks.

Yoka Brandt, Director-General for Development Cooperation, the Netherlands, called for innovative ways of funding local risk governance, including through leveraging private sector funding and coordinating international funding efforts across policy areas. Philip Verges, Small Equity Initiative, said building capacity and frameworks in developing countries can enable large investment flows as these countries offer high returns to investors willing to take on higher risks.

ADDRESSING WILDLAND FIRE RISK: During this roundtable discussion, chaired by Paola Deda, UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Pilar Gallego, Ministry of Interior, Spain, discussed an integrated management approach in preventing and fighting of forest fires, including an alerts dissemination tool. Alexander Chupriyan, Deputy Minister for Civil Defense, Emergencies and Natural Disasters, Russian Federation, highlighted his country’s response to wildfires in Russia in 2010.

One participant asked what preventive measures were taken to tackle fires in Russia, with Chupriyan noting that the implementation of those measures did not prevent the fires. Phil Cottle, ForestRe Ltd., recommended fire risk modeling for firefighting resource planning and noted that the key to...
avoiding significant losses is to prevent large catastrophic fire events. In a video link with South Africa, Sundar Sharma, Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, Nepal, said that fire has traditionally been used as a tool for land management in his region. He also highlighted new community-based wildfire management models. Kholiwe Luvuno, Working on Fire, South Africa, described South Africa’s FireWise Communities Programme, a fire awareness and prevention project. Another participant noted that in Togo, firebreaks and early-warning systems are used to limit the impacts of fire.

STRENGTHENING LOCAL RECOVERY: As part of the World Reconstruction Conference taking place within the Global Platform, Chair David Taylor, World Vision International, asked panelists to identify simple, workable actions to strengthen local recovery. Shozo Azuma, Senior Vice Minister for Disaster Management, Japan, said priorities after the earthquake in Japan included the construction of temporary housing and revitalization of local economies. He described good practices, including movement of settlements to higher grounds and evacuation drills for school children. Syamsul Maarif, National Agency for Disaster Management, Indonesia, said external assistance during recovery can lead to dependency on assistance providers, which harms the social capital and capabilities of affected populations. Robert Glasser, CARE International, emphasized the importance of local ownership for: decision-making close to affected populations; sustainable outcomes; cost-effectiveness; use of appropriate technology, material and skills; and empowerment. He lamented that donor driven agendas tend to favor visible projects. Another participant noted that in Togo, firebreaks and early-warning systems are used to limit the impacts of fire.

GLOBAL ASSESSMENT REPORT BRIEFING: Margareta Wahlström chaired the session on the Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction. Rhoda Peace Tumusiime, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, African Union, noted that the Report provides insights on reducing vulnerabilities by strengthening risk governance capacity. Julia Marton-Lefèvre, IUCN, said that declining ecosystems is one of the main drivers of global risk and that disaster risk management should focus on the relationship between nature and disasters.

Andrew Maskrey, UNISDR, highlighted key findings of the report, including evidence that: economic loss risk continues to increase across all regions, whereas mortality risk is lower compared to 20 years ago; drought is a hidden risk caused by poor water and land-use management; governments are liable for a significant part of expected losses but do not have the contingency financing to match the liabilities incurred; and risk can be mitigated by reducing vulnerabilities, and through ecosystem-based disaster-risk management.

Geoffrey Love, WMO, highlighted that drought is a complex phenomenon not always associated with rainfall. Tricia Holly Davis, Willis Group, emphasized that disasters impact development activities. One participant highlighted the importance of collaboration between private enterprises and local communities.

DIALOGUE WITH PARLIAMENTARIANS AND MAYORS: Mel Senen Sarmiento, House of Representatives, the Philippines, moderating the session, noted that DRR is critical in bridging the gap between local communities and national governments. Xie Ruiwu, Vice Mayor of Chengdu, Sichuan, China, outlined actions undertaken following the earthquake in 2008, noting that recovery efforts centered on the well-being of the population. Xie said that both public and private sectors undertook reconstructions tasks. Saumura Toulong, International Parliamentary Union Second Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade, Cambodia, summarized the importance of DRR, stressing that disaster preparedness is imperative. She called for parliamentarians to play a bigger role in awareness raising.

Underscoring the importance of relevant legislation, oversight and budget appropriation for DRR, Alex Byarugaba, Member of Parliament, Uganda, called for increased capacity within countries for disaster preparedness and recovery. Nelly Gray de Cerdán, Senator of Mendoza, Argentina, advocated for DRR to be incorporated into legislation governing urban planning. She also stressed that political views need to be transcended when engaging in DRR. Khalifa Sall, Mayor of Dakar, Senegal, encouraged future collaboration with both private and public sectors in efforts to plan and implement DRR. Peter Williams, Chief Technology Officer, IBM, noted the importance of a common understanding of all aspects of DRR for effective planning and implementation.

In the ensuing discussion, participants highlighted: accessing funds at national, regional and international level; the involvement of all sectors in DRR; and legislation to compel preparedness.