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Foreword

The impact of disasters has been dramatically increasing over the decades. This is due to the fact that communities and their assets have been more exposed to the impact of natural hazards. Unplanned urbanization, environmental degradation, population growth and poverty are some of the inter-linked factors that increase their vulnerability. Disasters are especially ruinous for developing countries: the smaller the economy and the weaker the infrastructure, the greater the human cost and damage to development prospects. In addition, hydrometeorological disasters already appear to be increasing in frequency and intensity, consistent with climate change predictions. Efforts to build resilience to disasters are therefore more urgent than ever.

To deal comprehensively with disaster risk, 168 countries and organisations gathered in January 2005 at the Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction, where they unanimously adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters. The Hyogo Framework (HFA) recommends five priorities for action to create a safer and more disaster-resilient world. Crucially, the HFA gives guidelines on how to implement changes in order to arrive at its goal of "[s]ubstantial reduction of disaster losses, in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries".

A particular emphasis of the HFA is the need for multi-stakeholder involvement and national coordination to reduce disaster risk. Specifically, it recalls earlier recommendations and UN resolutions in asking countries to set up institutional mechanisms (National Platforms) for disaster risk reduction. These National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction will have designated responsibilities to ensure that disaster risk reduction becomes a national and local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation. They will be critical mechanisms for enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of disaster risk measures at national level, by harnessing the potential of all stakeholders in this field.

At present, 45 countries have already launched National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction. Several other countries are in a process of establishing them. This publication aims to inspire and support the birth of new National Platforms, and also to strengthen existing ones.

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Introduction

Governments increasingly recognize the need for comprehensive multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral national coordinating mechanisms to reduce, prevent and manage the impact of natural hazards. This commitment was expressed in several United Nations Economic and Social Council and General Assembly Resolutions adopted at the end of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR 1990-1999). More recently, the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 (HFA), adopted by 168 governments at the 2005 World Conference for Disaster Reduction, emphasized the importance of setting up National Platforms with designated responsibilities at national and local level.

A National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction is a nationally owned and nationally led forum or committee for advocacy, coordination, analysis and advice on disaster risk reduction (DRR). Ideally, a National Platform is built on existing mechanisms, and is comprised of the full range of stakeholders concerned with disaster risk reduction, harnessing their combined potential to build resilience to disasters. Stakeholders include government (relevant line ministries and disaster management authorities), non-governmental organizations, academic and scientific institutions, professional associations, Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies, the private sector, and the media. National Platforms have also invited bilateral development agencies, United Nations organizations and the World Bank to participate.

Following the provisions of the HFA, a National Platform should be *the coordination* mechanism for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development policies, planning and programmes. As such, they should cover all issues and sectors related to disaster risk reduction including agriculture, community development, education, energy, environment, financing for development, housing, infrastructure, planning, science and technology, and water and sanitation.

Government officials and HFA Focal Points gathered for the First Consultative Meeting on National Platforms in Pretoria, South Africa, in October 2006, with support of the UN/ISDR secretariat and ISDR system members. At this meeting, the national representatives requested the UN/ISDR secretariat to document good practices of National Platforms for DRR. This resulting publication of good practices collects nine country cases, giving examples of how National Platforms have been established and how they have worked. The good practices show how to engage in international exchange for mutual learning and improvement of national Disaster Risk Management (DRM) systems (China), how to successfully decentralize DRR moving from national to local coordinating mechanisms (Colombia), how to mobilize funds for DRR (Costa Rica), how to serve as the national knowledge hub and organize international events for DRR (Germany), how to establish and implement comprehensive national action plans for DRM (Iran and Sri Lanka), how to successfully use National Platforms to prepare

for hazardous events through contingency planning (Madagascar), how to integrate DRR in national development plans (Nigeria) and how to ensure multi-stakeholder coordination and sustained commitment over a longer period of time (Switzerland). These examples demonstrate the added value of multi-sectoral National Platforms, and how much countries can learn directly from each other.

This publication is primarily aimed at National Disaster Management Authorities and national disaster risk reduction stakeholders, but also ISDR system partners and bilateral development agencies. It is hoped that it will fuel further national commitment and concrete action in establishing and working through National Platforms to reduce disaster risk.

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