

UNISDR Regional Platform of the Americas

Statement by the Delegation of the United States of America

As Prepared For Delivery by Head of Delegation Timothy W. Manning

Guayaquil, Ecuador

12:20pm, May 27, 2014

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Since the Global Platform meeting last May, the world has been struck with a number of extraordinary disasters – the most destructive of which was Typhoon Haiyan. One of the strongest tropical cyclones ever recorded, Haiyan devastated portions of Southeast Asia in November 2013. Over 6,000 people were killed in the Philippines alone, underscoring that the unrelenting global challenges we face have never been greater, nor our collective efforts more important, to reducing disaster risks worldwide.

In addition to Typhoon Haiyan, extreme events in the United States in the past year – such as powerful tornadoes and flooding in the Midwest, unprecedented winter weather in the South and East, deadly landslides in Colorado and Washington states, and record drought and wildland fires in the West – have wrought some of the most destructive and costly disasters in recent U.S. history. The devastating impacts of these disasters highlight several opportunities for improvement, including the need for more advanced planning and preparedness to make us safer and more resilient during emergencies and extreme events. I am pleased to note, however, that scientific and technological advancements in early warnings greatly reduced the loss of life in several of these instances, and innovative and collaborative efforts helped mitigate hazard impacts on lives and property.

Unfortunately, the global pattern of extreme weather and devastation has become routine, and governments must be prepared to adjust policies and practices and consider directing resources to manage risk in order to minimize devastation. To be sure, resources to address these risks are limited as many countries face significant and complex economic challenges that will not be resolved overnight. Consequently, disaster risk reduction (DRR) efforts must be smarter, accessible at the local level, and aimed at achieving practical results. Robust preparations at all levels can help prevent significant destruction and loss of life.

The international community must remain steadfast in pursuing the markers set out in the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) even as we lay the groundwork and priorities for the post-HFA agenda in 2015 and beyond. The United States continues to endorse the framework's goals and apply its principles through our own institutions and internationally. For example, recognizing that

preparedness is a shared responsibility, President Obama signed the National Preparedness Policy in March 2011 and announced the release of the first-ever National Preparedness Goal in October 2011. These initiatives engage the “whole community” approach – consisting of government, business, and individuals – in a systematic effort to make the United States safer and more resilient to hazards. The policies embrace the HFA’s priorities for action, such as reducing underlying risk and building a culture of resilience through our recently released National Mitigation Framework.

There is scope to integrate disaster risk reduction and broader resilience into the post-2015 development agenda in a dynamic and relevant way. We welcome a post-2015 paradigm that speaks to the ways in which disaster risk reduction (DRR) can, and in some cases should, be viewed as part of a whole, including the post-Hyogo framework (HFA2), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in taking action on climate change. DRR, climate adaptation, and wider development efforts are mutually reinforcing and should be tackled in an integrated manner. However, we remain concerned about what an integrated approach among these agendas and goals will look like. The United States looks forward to participating in the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda. While we support discussions in the context of the post-Hyogo framework about how DRR can support and be incorporated into the post-2015 agenda, the framework itself should not seek to prejudice the ultimate agenda to be decided in forthcoming intergovernmental negotiations.

President Obama also announced his Climate Action Plan in June 2013. While no one single disaster can be attributed directly to climate change, the CAP outlines steps the United States government will take to prepare the United States for the impacts of a changing climate, which likely will include increasing extreme weather events and other changing natural hazards, and we are working to implement the President’s plan at the national as well as state and local levels. Though, importantly, climate change is only one of many complex factors contributing to disasters – non-climatic factors such as a lack of capacity, lack of governance, environmental and natural resource degradation, population growth, rapid urbanization, poverty, lack of economic development, settlement in hazard-prone areas, and many other factors determine whether a natural hazard becomes a disaster.

For these reasons, the United States supports the HFA as a strong basis for the HFA2, recognizing that the follow-on framework must reflect increasingly prevalent challenges and trends, such as climate change. The United States supports the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s Special Report on Managing the Risk of Extremes and Disasters (IPCC/SREX) conclusions that disaster risk reduction measures are an effective way to adapt to climate variability and change, and we support closer integration of the two issues. Additionally, DRR should be integrated into sustainable development and poverty

eradication policies, plans, program and budgets at all levels, and should be given consideration within relevant future frameworks.

We also need to strengthen existing physical infrastructure in the face of more extreme events. In many countries, aging infrastructures are often not built to withstand the increasing frequency and/or intensity of the natural hazard events. In some regions this will exacerbate existing vulnerabilities. In other countries, infrastructures supporting clean water, sanitation, decent housing, communications, transportation systems, and electricity are poor, unreliable, or nonexistent. Improving these systems, along with incorporating some degree of accountability in the HFA2, may increase livability, reduce diseases, and strengthen the resiliency of populations.

DRR is a shared responsibility and calls for the involvement of everyone. Post-Hyogo processes should therefore encourage active participation of a broad range of civil society actors, including affected communities, the private sector, and academia. The HFA2 must pay increased attention to integrating the whole community into disaster risk reduction and resilience measures, including individuals – such as women, persons with disabilities, and older persons – who may experience a disproportionate impact during and after a disaster.

U.S. programs support governments, communities, and civil society in reducing the risk of and preparing for disasters by safeguarding lives, livelihoods, services and facilities – ultimately increasing resilience to adverse transitory events globally. While these challenges may seem daunting, the opportunities for collaboration are numerous. The United States remains committed to working with the international community toward the common goal of reducing disaster risk worldwide.

Thank you.