



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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IPU Statement

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Parliamentary Meeting on the
Occasion of the Third UN World
Conference on Disaster Risk
Reduction

Sendai, 13 March 2015

Madam Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, Honourable Members of Parliament, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you all on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to the Parliamentary Meeting that we are jointly organizing with the UNISDR on occasion of the 3rd UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction.

2015 is a critical year as three major UN processes move to resolution – Conference on DRR here in Sendai, adoption of SDGs to replace MDGs in September at the UN and COP meeting in Paris in December to find consensus on climate change.

All three processes are critical to achieving sustainability and as Parliamentarians, we need to see this nexus, connect the dots and ensure the agreements are inter-locking and mutually reinforcing in design as well as implementation.

This meeting is taking place at a critical time as policymakers and practitioners try to come to grips with an unprecedented impact of disasters on people and societies. Despite progress in disaster management and resilience building, much more needs to be done – over last 10 years 700,000 people have died in disaster events, lives of 1.7 billion people have been impacted and economic losses have been over \$1.4 trillion. What is also disconcerting is that even for OECD countries, losses on account of disasters is more than rate at which we are creating wealth.

Unless addressed, losses will be even greater in the future. As per IPCC, disasters will strike with increased frequency and intensity due to impacts of climate change – a 10 year review has concluded that 87% of disasters are climate related.

It is thus absolutely imperative that the World Conference on DRR here in Sendai provides clear, action oriented guidance on how best to tackle underlying drivers of risk such as poorly planned and managed urbanisation, poverty, inequality, climate change, crossing the planetary boundaries of environmental safety. We need to steer a new course that combines economic prosperity with social inclusion and justice and protection of the natural environment

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we will be discussing Governance and Legislation for Disaster Risk Reduction. This is a topic that I hold close to my heart and I am delighted to see so many of you here to share your experiences, identify new strategies and make commitments for addressing the impact of disasters on our societies and the world.

For the IPU, the impact of disasters is a critical political question in which parliamentarians have an important role to play. In cooperation with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, we have striven to mobilise legislators around this issue over the past several years. In the fall of 2010, we launched together an Advocacy Kit for Parliamentarians. This is a tool, now available in the six official languages of the UN, designed to assist parliamentarians in overseeing national progress and investments towards achieving the MDGs in their respective countries through the prism of disaster risk reduction.

In both 2011 and 2012, we convened side events at IPU Assemblies to explore concrete modalities through which parliaments and parliamentarians can address disaster risk reduction. All these activities culminated in the spring of 2014 when IPU's 165 Member Parliaments unanimously adopted a resolution *Towards risk-resilient development: Taking into consideration demographic trends and natural constraints*.

The resolution recommends parliamentary action in areas such as resilience building, risk management and early warning systems, and calls on parliamentarians to use the legislative, oversight and accountability tools at their disposal to ensure risk-resilient development.

I am very pleased to see that the resolution helped mobilize parliamentary contribution to the UN process leading up to the establishment of the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Clear references to the role of parliaments and the IPU in the outcome document that is set for adoption here in Sendai are a strong indicator of the important role that we all play in reducing risk of disasters.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Democratic governance is essential to the realization of sustainable development. The core values of participation, transparency and accountability that underpin democratic governance are not only a goal in their own right, but they help to drive progress towards all development goals.

Democratic governance is the key to ensuring that representatives are responsive to people's needs and can be held accountable for the results achieved. In order to achieve significant results in improving resilience of our societies, I cannot emphasize enough the need to strengthen accountability frameworks at the national level and the central role that parliaments play in holding governments to account. I hope that parliaments in all countries will take action to bring this accountability into play when it comes to implementation of commitments made in the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

I am convinced that through political ownership, will and adherence to core values of democratic governance, we can accelerate the progress in disaster risk reduction. With this conviction in mind, I pledge my own support to the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, as well as that of the IPU.

I would like to conclude by saying that we at the IPU very much value the cooperation with the UNISDR. We look forward to continued cooperation to engage legislators and help mobilize parliamentary action towards building risk-resilient societies.

Thank you.