

Outcomes of the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

Sharing Japan's Knowledge with the World

By Yuki Matsuoka



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The Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction was held in Sendai on March 14-18, and the "Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030" (Sendai Framework), which will be the international guidelines on disaster risk reduction for the next 15 years, was adopted. Over 6,500 participants, including representatives from the 185 UN Member States, attended the plenary meeting which was held at the Sendai International Center. It was the largest UN-related international conference ever held in Japan. Since the last conference, the Second UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction (which was held in Hyogo, Japan), there had been a growing awareness that a multi-stakeholder involvement is critical in disaster risk reduction. This has created grounds for many stakeholders to take part in international discussions on disaster risk reduction. As a result, this year saw government representatives from 185 Member States, 25 world leaders (heads of state, vice presidents, and heads of government), more than 100 ministerial level participants from various ministries and agencies, 42 inter-governmental organizations, 236 NGOs, and 38 international organizations participating in the conference. There were also more than

300 participants from the private sector, more than 280 participants from local governments, and more than 780 participants from the media. At the Public Forum which the general public was able to attend, more than 350 events were held and approximately 50,000 people attended (total accumulated entrances are 150,000 people).

Under the collaboration of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), the government of Japan, Sendai city, and The Nippon Foundation, this conference was also an innovative one with various measures implemented to make it accessible to persons with disabilities. In addition, to make it an environment-conscious occasion, efforts were made for the greening of the conference, such as convening a paper smart conference by reducing the use of paper. This conference provided a useful precedent for future international conferences.

What Is the UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction?

The UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction is a gathering organized by the United Nations to discuss international disaster risk reduction strategies. The first such conference was held in Yokohama, in Kanagawa Prefecture, in 1994 and the second in Kobe, in Hyogo Prefecture, in 2005. At the latter, a 10-year global guideline — the "Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters" (HFA) — was adopted. The third conference reviewed the past 10-year implementation of the HFA, and was convened with the purpose of adopting a new framework that will take over from the HFA in serving as an international guideline for disaster risk reduction beyond 2015. The UNISDR served as the Secretariat for this third conference, which consisted of three segments: the inter-governmental segment, the multi-stakeholder segment, and the public forum. In many of the sessions, speakers from Japan shared Japan's knowledge, expertise

Photo: UNISDR



Plenary meeting

Photo: UNISDR



Public forum

Photo: UNISDR



Sign language translation at the conference

Photo: UNISDR



Press conference by UN Secretary Ban Ki-Moon and Margareta Wahlström, UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, on March 14

and lessons learned from past experiences of disasters, such as the Great East Japan Earthquake and the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake.

When talking about the outcome of the third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, one cannot ignore the developments in international debates on disaster risk reduction for the last couple of decades. The Sendai Framework does not overwrite the HFA, but rather, its adoption was based on an accumulation of discussions and progress over the past 20 years and more. Especially since the adoption of the HFA in 2005, the ground has been laid to promote the participation of various actors through two platforms organized by the UNISDR as an important pillar of the mechanism: first, the Global Platform on disaster risk reduction, which is a biennial forum for information exchange, discussion of the latest developments and knowledge and partnership-building across sectors, with the goal of promoting the HFA implementation through better communication and coordination amongst stakeholders; and second, the Regional Platforms that are held every two years in various regions promote the HFA implementation in the regions. The Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction (<http://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/gar>) which is published by the UNISDR every two years looks at advanced thematic issues, and offers analyses which serve as convincing material that disaster risk reduction is not a cost, but an investment. These all led to the success of the Sendai Conference.

While the adoption of the Sendai Declaration and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction was the main outcome of the third conference, there were also various commitments on disaster risk reduction being announced by the various organizations, both before and during the conference. In addition to the 88 commitments that were announced prior to the conference, there were around 120 concrete commitments made public during it. Included in these commitments was the announcement made by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on the “Sendai Cooperation Initiative for Disaster Risk Reduction”. Together with the many stakeholders who have committed to disaster risk reduction which has expanded since 2005, the implementation of the Sendai Framework is expected to demonstrate concrete accomplishments in the coming 15 years.

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (http://www.wcdrr.org/uploads/Sendai_Framework_for_Disaster_Risk_Reduction_2015-2030.pdf) and the Sendai Declaration are the two documents to come out of the third conference. With Japan as the host country of this conference, the Japanese government took the lead in drafting the Sendai Declaration, which reconfirms commitment by participating countries to disaster risk reduction. The Sendai Framework is a 25-page document, and as the *Table* shows, it consists of six chapters, defines the 13 guiding principles, and sets the seven targets and four priorities for actions.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030



Working session

(Sendai Framework) maps out a broad, people-centered approach to disaster risk reduction and applies to the risk of small-scale and large-scale disasters caused by natural or man-made hazards as well as related environmental, technological and biological hazards and risks. It aims to guide the multi-hazard management of disaster risk in development at all levels as well as within and across sectors. Strong political leadership and commitment is required to achieve the outcome. The Sendai Framework aims to achieve the following outcome over the next 15 years: “the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries”. To attain the expected outcome, the goal to be pursued is to “prevent new and reduce existing disaster risk through the implementation of integrated and inclusive economic, structural, legal, social, health, cultural, educational, environmental, technological, political and institutional measures that prevent and reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability to disaster, increase preparedness for response and recovery, and thus strengthen resilience”.

To support the assessment of global progress in achieving the outcome and goal of the Sendai Framework, the seven global targets have been agreed. One point of major progress is that concrete targets that were not included in the HFA are now included in the Sendai Framework. The adoption of these concrete targets would not have been possible without the efforts and accomplishments that have been made during these past 10 years along with the HFA as the center piece.

The seven global targets that will be measured at the global level:

(a) Substantially reduce global disaster mortality by 2030, aiming to

TABLE

Contents of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

I. Preamble
II. Expected outcome and goal
III. Guiding principles
IV. Priorities for action
Priority 1: Understanding disaster risk
Priority 2: Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk
Priority 3: Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience
Priority 4: Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.
V. Role of stakeholders
VI. International cooperation and global partnership

Source: UNISDR

lower average per 100,000 global mortality between 2020-2030 compared to 2005-2015.

(b) Substantially reduce the number of affected people globally by 2030, aiming to lower the average global figure per 100,000 between 2020-2030 compared to 2005-2015.

(c) Reduce direct disaster economic loss in relation to global gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030.

(d) Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, among them health and educational facilities, including through developing their resilience by 2030.

(e) Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020.

(f) Substantially enhance international cooperation to developing countries through adequate and sustainable support to complement their national actions for implementation of this framework by 2030.

(g) Substantially increase the availability of, and access to, multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to the people by 2030.

The Framework offers an important guidance for various countries and their governments in setting national targets and indicators which will contribute to the achievement of the outcome and goal of this framework. The Framework is also calling for the development and dissemination of science-based methodologies and tools to record and share disaster losses and relevant disaggregated data and statistics.

While the HFA specified five priorities for action, the Sendai Framework has reorganized and restructured those into four priority actions. It is worth noting that the Framework has placed emphasis on prevention of generating new risks, in addition to reducing existing disaster risks. The Sendai Framework has put more emphasis on efforts to reduce disaster risks in the recovery process. The recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phase, which needs to be prepared ahead of the disaster, is an opportunity to build back better through integrating DRR measures.

Over 40% of the Framework document is taken up by the four priorities for action which set out concrete action recommendations. There is a need for focused action within and across sectors by States at local, national, regional and global levels in the following four priority areas:

- (1) Priority 1: Understanding disaster risk
- (2) Priority 2: Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk
- (3) Priority 3: Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience
- (4) Priority 4: Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Expansion of Stakeholders

As the guiding principles of the Sendai Framework specifies, each State has the primary responsibility to prevent and reduce disaster risk. Responsibility is shared by national governments and relevant authorities, sectors and stakeholders. Disaster risk management is aimed at protecting persons and vital assets while promoting and protecting all human rights, including the right to development. It requires participation by all State institutions and an all-of-society engagement and partnership, paying special attention to those most affected by disasters, especially the poor, and including a gender, age, disability and cultural

perspective in all policies and practices. Local authorities and communities need to be empowered, and women and youth leadership should be promoted. The Sendai Framework contributes towards enhanced coherence in policies, plans, practices and mechanisms across the post-2015 development agenda.

The roles and contributions of the different stakeholders are mentioned in Chapter V, and women and children, who were only recognized as a vulnerable group of people in the HFA, are now recognized as a stakeholder contributing to disaster risk reduction and the importance of their participation and leadership is emphasized in the Sendai Framework. The need for private sector involvement is also mentioned, and the importance of public private partnerships is emphasized.

In Chapter V on stakeholders, the participation of civil society, volunteers, organized voluntary work organizations and community-based organizations, as well as the importance of their roles, is emphasized. At the same time, the contributions that women, children and youth, persons with disabilities and their organizations, older persons, indigenous people, and migrants can make are also noted. The roles of academia, scientific and research entities and networks, business, professional associations and private sector financial institutions, and the media are also mentioned.

The HFA hardly touched on the role of the private sector. But in the past 10 years, awareness of the importance of private sector contributions in disaster risk reduction has risen, and the Sendai Framework emphasized the role and contributions of the private sector. The Framework not only looks at the perspectives of the sustainability of companies or their business continuity, but also touches on their potential in contributing to the sustainability of society (including improving the continuity of the supply chain) and in improving the resilience of the society to disasters by using their expertise. It is also noted that there is a need for the public and private sectors and civil society organizations, as well as academia and scientific and research institutions, to work more closely together and to create opportunities for collaboration, and for business to integrate disaster risk into their management practices. Development and promotion of disaster risk reduction technology and promotion of disaster risk reduction investments by the public-private partnership are also encouraged in the Framework.

I personally have great expectations of the Japanese private sector, with its strengths and expertise being utilized in building resilience and also in disaster risk reduction. Businesses that help to sustain social functions during disaster periods are in themselves a business opportunity. As the mindset towards building resilience against disasters gains more momentum in society, so will the market itself, and this will lead to greater business opportunities.

The Sendai Framework will serve as the guideline for the various governments in planning and implementing their own national disaster risk reduction policies and strategies for the next 15 years. As many stakeholders proceed with their own efforts based on this common framework, international cooperation for disaster risk reduction will have synergies, and the efforts for disaster risk reduction are expected to pick up speed globally. The UNISDR will continue to cooperate and work with many stakeholders, strengthen the mechanisms including the Global Platform and Regional Platform, and work to promote the implementation of the Sendai Framework, and monitor its progress.

Photo: UNISDR



Visit to temporary housing

Photo: Save the Children Japan



Dialogue with children of Tohoku region

Photo: UNISDR



Dialogue with women of Fukushima

Special Representative Wahlström's visits to the Tohoku region (2011-2014)

Photos: UNISDR



International Day for Disaster Reduction 2013 Event at Rikuzen Takada city



Dialogue with persons with disabilities

Conclusion

2015 is a year in which critical conferences will be held, starting with the one on disaster risk reduction held in March, and including others on financing for development in July, on sustainable development in September, and on climate change in December. It is therefore a critical year that will be closely watched as a turning point in addressing global issues. From this perspective, the Sendai Framework will serve as the basis for a post-2015 development agenda. It can be said that the groundwork for the path toward agreement on sustainable development and climate change later this year has been established in Sendai.

This conference also served as an opportunity to communicate to the world the experiences and lessons learned from the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 and the recovery and reconstruction efforts of Japan.

Four prefectures (Miyagi, Iwate, Fukushima, and Yamagata) in Tohoku which were struck by the earthquake organized a number of study tours for the participants during the conference. The conference participants were given an important opportunity to make actual visits to the disaster-affected areas. The participants that visited had the opportunity to hear about and observe the experiences of the people on the ground, who continue to work towards recovery and reconstruction of their communities. From this perspective, it was indeed meaningful for participants from around the world that a conference which aims to develop an international guideline for disaster risk reduction was held in Sendai, a city that was one of the disaster affected areas by the Great East Japan Earthquake. Communicating the experiences and lessons learned from the earthquake will provide a learning opportunity for the global community, and will further promote efforts and discussions on disaster risk reduction. Margareta Wahlström, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction who heads the UNISDR, has made seven visits to disaster areas in the Tohoku region since 2011 (as of March 2015) to have opportunities to listen to people's views and voices and to witness their recovery efforts, so that she can convey the experiences and lessons learned to the world.

As the host country of these three important conferences on disaster

risk reduction held so far, Japan has led the disaster risk reduction agenda internationally. In addition to the Japanese government and related entities, we hope that many of the Japanese stakeholders, including the private sector, continue to play active roles in implementing and promoting the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the outcome of this third conference on disaster risk reduction. **JS**

About the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) (www.unisdr.org)

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) was created in 2000 to follow up the "International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction" (IDNDR) (1990-1999). The main aims of the organization are to achieve a substantive reduction of disaster losses and to build resilience of communities and nations to disasters as an essential condition for sustainable development. The UNISDR serves as catalyst and focal point for disaster risk reduction within the United Nations family of organizations and amongst many ISDR partners. It advocates for disaster risk reduction and coordinates international efforts on disaster risk reduction. The centerpiece of its advocacy is the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, which was adopted as the successor of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. The UNISDR promotes the implementation of the Sendai Framework and support countries in their implementation of the Framework together with various partners, as well as monitoring and reporting on its progress.

The UNISDR headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland. Its offices are located around the world including New York, Bangkok, Nairobi, Cairo, Brussels, Panama, Bonn, and Almaty. The UNISDR Office in Japan was opened in October 2007 in Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture.

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