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DELEGATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Mr. Chair,

As the world’s largest humanitarian network, The IFRC and its Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies are firmly committed to sustainable development. As stated in the IFRC Strategy 2020, our specific contribution to sustainable development is through strengthening community resilience, which we believe to be critical to global progress towards sustainable development.

Mr. Chair,

The link between sustainable development and building resilience is clear; in order for vulnerable populations to make durable development gains, they must be resilient to the ever-increasing shocks they face. Among these shocks, disasters constitute a tremendous threat to sustainable development, especially when it comes to the poorest and most vulnerable. A recent report by the Overseas Development Institute states that by 2030, up to 319 million extremely poor individuals will live in areas highly-prone to disasters. Without a renewed sense of urgency on this issue, the IFRC fears that disasters will hinder progress towards sustainable development for years to come.

Mr. Chair,

The negative impact of disasters on development is well understood. Disasters have wiped out years of development progress in many Least Developing Countries (LDCs) and have resulted in huge economic losses in some of the richest countries in the world. Disaster risk is increasing, largely as a result of climate change and urbanization, as is the effect of disasters on vulnerable countries and people. As the SG report highlights, annual losses from disasters have crossed 100 billion for the third consecutive year. Over 100 million people were affected by disasters in the last year, despite the absence of a “mega-disaster” like the 2010 Haiti Earthquake. The IFRC reminds the committee that disasters have a disproportionate impact on the poorest countries, as well as on the poorest within countries. Since 1980, disasters in low-income countries have accounted for just 9% of disasters worldwide, and yet nearly 50% of all disaster-related fatalities occur in low-income countries. These numbers do not include all those affected by small to medium scale disasters, which rarely attract international attention or assistance. In the last year, the IFRC and the European Union have partnered to highlight the effect of these disasters on vulnerable people, ensuring that they receive the support they need and deserve.
The links between disaster risk reduction (DRR), climate change, and resilience have been recognized in successive resolutions of the UNGA, reports of the IPCC, and by all governments at Rio +20. What are missing from international efforts on DRR are not words but actions. Funding for DRR remains woefully low, representing just 0.4% of ODA. The funding that does exist is short term, fragmented, unpredictable, and concentrated largely in a few middle income countries. Further, the international system has tended to support some types of disasters over others, for example by generously financing disaster relief for megastorms, yet leaving 100 million people suffering from drought without adequate support. To address these issues, we call on donor countries to honor their commitment made at 2nd GPDRR held in Geneva in 2009 to allocate 1% of ODA to DRR. Further, this financing should be delivered in a way that enables the long-term investments necessary to truly build resilience and address disaster risk.

Mr. Chair,

Disaster impacts are felt most at the community level and thus so too should the investments made in building disaster resilience. At the national and international levels, addressing disaster risk has often focussed on large national investments in infrastructure. While this is critical, community level needs have often been ignored in the process. Local government and organizations working at the community level must be given adequate resources to address disaster risks and must be involved in the design and implementation of national and international frameworks for DRR. This will ensure that such frameworks and plans are appropriately conceived to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable.

Mr. Chair,

Allow me now to turn to the on-going efforts to define a development agenda post-2015. There are numerous options for including building resilience to disasters in the post-2015 agenda, many of which are explored in a paper to be published next week by the Overseas Development Institute, the IFRC, and the British Red Cross. Targets and indicators on DRR could feature in a poverty reduction goal, they could be part of a standalone goal on resilience, or they could be mainstreamed across the SDGs. However, in addressing disaster risk in the post-2015 agenda, allow me to make two concrete recommendations. First, we must build on disaster mortality to capture the wide range of disasters impacts on vulnerable people. Disaster mortality is just one indicator and targets and indicators need to address the social and economic impacts of disaster at the household level. Second, Disaster risk reduction measures in the post-2015 agenda should specifically address inequality. Time and time again, it is the most vulnerable groups that suffer disproportionately from disasters, and therefore they should be the target of our interventions.

Mr. Chair,

Over time, disasters have gone from a development “externality” to being recognized as a key challenge for sustainable development. The IFRC was pleased to see this consensus reflected in the Rio +20 outcome document, *The Future We Want*, which recognizes that DRR is a key priority area for the Sustainable Development Goals. We were further encouraged that the SG’s High Level Panel report on the post-2015 agenda included building resilience and reducing disaster mortality as a target in the poverty eradication goal. And we fully agree with the SG’s recommendation in his report that DRR should be addressed in the post-2015 agenda and the sustainable development goals. However, we are concerned that in the ever expanding list of post-2015 issues and priorities, DRR will fall out of the agenda when tough decisions on prioritization will have to be made. Let us not lose the momentum on this issue and ensure that addressing disaster risk is at the very core of sustainable development. I thank you Mr. Chair.