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Agenda item 69: Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations,
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Mr. President,

For the third consecutive year, the Philippines has been hit by a climate related disaster with devastating impact on the lives of the affected people and regions. Luckily, this last storm which hit the Philippines did not leave as much havoc on the lives of the affected people as did the last two. Thanks in large part to the efforts of the national and local authorities and the evacuation of over one million people before Hagupit (Ruby) made landfall, as well as to the resiliency of the people of the Philippines. In addition to the damage caused by the strength of the storm, including estimates of 30 to 60% housing damage close to the track of the storm in Eastern Samar, the slow-moving Hagupit has also caused significant flooding and some landslides which will have exacerbated the situation, especially for infrastructure, crops and livelihoods.

As clearly evident from the impact of such disasters on the Philippines, which have sustained losses amounting to 5% of its GDP every year since 2008, disaster impacts on poor countries and rapidly growing middle-income countries is disproportionately high. According to the report of the Secretary General, disaster related economic losses have crossed $100 billion for the fourth consecutive year.

Given the frequency and severity of such climate related disasters and its devastating impact, it is essential that efforts to adapt to climate change and efforts to reduce disaster risk are closely linked. This requires coordinated and comprehensive integration of these considerations in private and public planning and investment, and in the humanitarian and development agendas of all actors. It also requires prioritizing disaster risk management and coping strategies of affected communities themselves and increasing efforts at public awareness and education regarding disaster and climate risk.

The IFRC works in partnership with its 189 member Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies and supports them in their role as auxiliaries to their public authorities. In this context, the IFRC works with National Societies in building resilience by strengthening the preparedness and capacities of communities to better respond to and recover from disasters, and to promote actions that mitigate the adverse effects of hazards, and to protect development gains from the impact of disasters.

Mr. President,

Since the opening of the 69th session of the GA, Member States and the UN system have prioritized action on the Ebola virus disease at numerous meetings including at the Security Council, the General Assembly and ECOSOC. IFRC is grateful for the leadership of the affected countries and in particular for the national staff and volunteers who are fighting to turn the tide of this outbreak. We are also grateful for all the countries that have been
supporting these efforts with financial, human and logistical resources as well as for the UN Secretary-General and his envoys including the UNMEER team for their tireless efforts and support.

The IFRC and its member National Societies have responded to this emergency from the outset, even before the magnitude of this crisis became clear and its impact on the whole region and beyond. As we recognize Ebola as a complex global crisis, we must all work together in a coordinated, scaled-up and sustained effort. We need to be vigilant, persistent and equipped to respond to new challenges as they emerge.

To defeat Ebola, we need to simultaneously educate communities, isolate and treat patients, trace and monitor contacts, provide psychosocial support, and safely and respectfully bury those killed by the disease. We need to reach remote towns and villages and explain how the virus is transmitted, persuade people to change behaviours contributing to the spread of disease, and we need to stop the fear, the misconception and stigmatization. At the same time we should not ignore the impact of the crisis on the overall essential services and on food security and the livelihoods of entire communities.

In the longer term, it is vital that we learn the lessons and invest in the health care systems of the affected countries. This epidemic has further weakened what have been already weak health systems with little resources to sustain essential health services to handle other disease and pressures. And as the UN has highlighted, even as we focus intensely on the immediate threat, it is not too soon to start helping the affected countries recover.

Mr. President,

Finally, as the UN General Assembly gears up to the final phase of the adoption of the post 2015 development agenda, and as we prepare for the convening of the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan as well as the engagement with the World Humanitarian Summit our main focus in all these processes has been to work with Member States and partners to adopt policies and recommendations that strengthen resilient communities with the capacity to resist shocks, manage risks and bounce back from disasters and emergencies which until now has been lost in the gap between humanitarian and development agendas.

And as we engage actively in these processes, the main platform for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to collectively engage with states and agree on common agendas and commitments remains the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. Our 32nd International Conference will be convened in Geneva, Switzerland in December 2015, and we look forward to working with the States party to the Geneva Conventions in preparation for the conference.

Thank you.