Civil Society Group Statement to the 8th Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 2-6 July 2018

We, the civil society stakeholder group led by Asian Disaster Reduction and Response Network (ADRRN) with support from other networks including GNDR, along with other civil societies from the Asian region;

Recognize and refer to the Sendai Framework of Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) and work to ensure coherence among other Global Frameworks; to enable a "whole of society" approach to reduce disaster risks; Draw on continued engagement for DRR in Asia through the IAP and AMCDRR as self-organized stakeholder groups; Build on commitments to the Sendai Framework and Asian Regional Plan, as expressed in the Statement of Commitment at the 7th AMCDRR.

Over the past two years, civil society organisations have made positive strides in promoting the implementation of Sendai Framework at local, provincial and national levels through advocacy, capacity building and innovation. While there have been considerable achievements in DRR, much needs to be done to reduce risk and thereby promote sustainable and risk informed development.

Achievements

- New initiatives, including ADRRN thematic hubs, eco-based DRR, and local financing, to advance Sendai Framework implementation have been established.
- CSO representation role, and recognition, is increasing among the legal frameworks and in relationship with national and local government, private sector, academia, and other regional organizations.
- More emphasis is given on risk reduction instead of response-focused action, and both nationally and regionally active CSO networks are strengthening collaboration.

Challenges

- Enforcement of legal framework is still a challenge leading to limited movement on risk reduction initiatives and limitation in resources. Limited scope of incorporating manmade disasters, including industrial hazards and their health effects in risk reduction plans.
- Too many pilot projects are being done, and sharing of experience, tips, and resources should be intensified in order to synergize different initiatives in the region. Regional networks such as ASEAN and SAARC should also co-learn from each member's best practices.
- Interlinkages of various risks are not assessed enough, and are not being incorporated into respective national risk reduction plans.

Opportunities

- There is a widely shared recognition that evidence generation and practical sharing of knowledge, experience, and expertise is required.
- With various global frameworks converging for greater impact on the ground, there is a scope for further promoting multi-sectoral collaboration and cooperation leading to improved and risk informed development.
- The CSOs in the region are rapidly increasing their professionalization and are becoming key conveners of Sendai Framework's implementation, particularly at the local level.

Civil society by the virtue of being locally based have better understanding of the local context, specialised expertise, innovative programming and proven outreach to communities who lack access to large-scale programming. The success of Sendai Framework will be best evidenced when local people are resilient and healthy, and environmental and livelihood losses due to natural and human-made disaster are minimized. To achieve this, meaningful participation and action of all local people and actors is quintessential, thereby placing civil society in a unique position of being a key facilitator between and with governments and communities simultaneously. This will require a supportive institutional and political environment to facilitate the engagement of local people and actors, together with access to adequate means of implementation for local actions.

We hereby commit to the implementation of the Asian Regional Plan and will contribute through the following actions for the implementation of the Asia Regional Plan with a particular focus on Milestones set for 2020.

1. Continue supporting communities from risk mapping to risk informed development planning to voice their concerns, strengthen knowledge and facilitate equitable participation in DRR in cooperation with the local and national Governments in the implementation of the Sendai Framework.
2. Ensure resources and benefits of DRR are reaching to the last mile on-time so that no one is left behind; and reinforce resilience of households and communities by promoting a 'culture of safety'.
3. Spread the benefits of DRR across the spectrum by promoting evidence building of local level implementation of DRR through independent assessments and research.
4. In continued appreciation and recognition of local and indigenous culture, we aim to ensure inclusiveness of all groups especially women, children, elderly, persons with disability and other marginalized groups in the design, planning, implementation and monitoring of preparedness, response and recovery actions.
5. As ADRRN, represent the voice of the civil society organizations, networks and groups on DRR in partnership with regional and national platforms, national government and other stakeholders.
6. Become a resource for the government to promote durable, scalable, replicable and sustainable local level strategies, initiatives and innovations piloted by civil society organizations.
7. Strengthen the implementation of DRR policies and actions by assessing the national and local level indicators developed in line with the Sendai Framework Monitor.
8. Promote the collection of gender, age, ethnicity and disability dis-aggregated data to monitor inclusion in all initiatives.
9. Identify and capture information and knowledge on good practices of disaster risk management and disseminate them for wider learning at national and regional forums
10. Foster development leadership and forums at local level and engage them and their voices at national and regional platforms; and
11. Promote learning and strengthen space for north-south and south-south engagement and regional cooperation among civil society stakeholder groups with a particular emphasis on effective early warning mechanisms of trans-boundary hydro-meteorological hazards.

In order to support the delivery of these commitments, we call on all governments and partners to:

- *Enhance synergy between implementation of the Global Frameworks*

The recurring incidents of natural disasters coupled with rising incidents of extreme climate events are putting more people at risk with each passing year. The threat to the development gains made in the last decade and half have increased in recent times due the changing nature of disasters. Addressing the underlying risk drivers as well as anticipation and mitigation of newer risks coupled with vulnerability reduction provides an opportunity to sustain an upward development course. The Governments and agencies working on DRR should align their national and local DRR strategies and overall development plans in line with the Sendai Framework. Other post-2015 frameworks like the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Paris Agreement on Climate Change, Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, Agenda for Humanity, the New Urban Agenda and regional processes including Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development must give priority to risk reduction and inclusive resilience building of communities at risk and considered inputs from these should get synthesized into local strategies and plans. This alignment includes coherence of the targets, indicators and actions across all relevant public agencies.

- *Provide enabling environment for innovation, policy dialogue and access to technology*

A significant resource exists with local communities and other actors in the form of indigenous knowledge, extensive life experiences and practices that have evolved over the years of surviving various disaster risks. This resource must be channelized to enhance the existing DRR knowledge base and institutionalized to the highest possible extent. Governments should foster an environment that enables this through innovation, policy level talks and making appropriate technology platforms accessible for local communities and actors.

- *Actively engage all stakeholders for Sendai Framework Implementation and Monitoring*

In order to translate the Sendai Framework into concrete actions and promulgate its importance, it is crucial that all concerned stakeholders be engaged to the optimum. Participation from diverse stakeholders at the local level alongside ensuring engagement of grassroots actors will play a big role in decentralizing the onus towards making the recommendations of the Sendai Framework a reality. Hence stakeholders such as Government Actors, Community Based Organizations, Local Institutions and the Community itself must all be provided the necessary space for engaging in both, implementation and monitoring of Sendai Framework. The requisite knowledge sharing and capacity enhancement should be integral to this engagement.

- *Increase financial support for localisation of Sendai Framework*

Consultative participation alone provides little scope for equitable partnership. There must be local level access to technologies and capacities, appropriate budget and funding allocations and flexibility for need-based use. Non-traditional donors – including impact investors, social entrepreneurs and private foundations – also have a role to play in providing innovative financing mechanisms for implementation at the local level. Investment in DRR should be increased for the vulnerable communities.

- *Promote local leadership and forums*

Local leader platforms and forums should be created and promoted at the local level where open and frequent discussions on the different dimensions of the Sendai Framework can be encouraged. Local Champions and Ambassadors, setting model examples and propelling the cause as a local voice

of reason would act as driving force. Local leadership must be nurtured and exchange programs for learning and sharing be encouraged.

- *Ensure inclusion of most at-risk people at decision-making*

The lens of looking at vulnerable groups has long shifted from development to empowerment. It is now well established that real development may only be achieved through empowerment. Inclusion through participation is key to bringing about this empowerment. Inclusion of at risk individuals and communities in design and implementation of programmes must be done in a way that ensures that they are not just looked at as service recipients but also as potential resources and contributors. Their representation as local experts and leaders should be ensured in all stages of programme, from planning to monitoring, and especially during critical decision making points.

- *Develop and enhance inclusive national and local platforms for sharing and learning on experiences of Target E implementation.*

Sharing of experiences with regards to development of national and local level Disaster Risk Reduction strategies need to be prioritised. Appropriate platforms that enable this sharing should be created and enhanced to ensure that learning from these experiences get articulated in a proper way and these learnings are then utilized to improve legal, policy and regulatory environments for a holistic approach to risk reduction. Governments must also promote and incentivise risk aware investment and risk sensitive development for the private sector to further the cause and make the approach more holistic.

- *Develop and strengthen risk knowledge systems to guide planning and implementation*

The world is at its most dynamic and disaster risk reduction today is a versatile and constantly transforming concept. It is vital that actors dealing with DRR and Climate Induced Disaster Risks stay appraised and evolve in their understanding of the concept. National Governments must invest in building and strengthening the knowledge base, encouraging knowledge sharing and transfer and utilize this knowledge to guide planning and implementation of Sendai Framework.

- *Strengthen South-South cooperation*

There should be an objective and focussed investment to develop regional cooperation for development of disaster resilient infrastructure and enabling environment for promotion of DRR work. Intra-regional dialogues, knowledge exchange and sharing of good practices should be promoted. Regional leaders must concur on key issues and challenges related to DRR and advocate for the same in the region. National development plans should be risk informed, aligned with DRR strategies and this practice should be encouraged as a necessity across the region.