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Permanent Mission
of Thailand
to the United Nations

Concept Paper

High-level special event

“Reducing risks from water related disasters: a must for the post-2015 development agenda”

Thursday, 25 September 2014, from 09:00 a.m. to 10:30a.m.,

Conference Room 3 (CB), UNHQ

Rationale

The risks from water related disasters, which represent more than 80 percent of all natural disasters, have been increasing both in terms of their frequency and severity with climate change and ill-advised human activities. For floods alone, the number of people exposed to potentially devastating floods is set to double to 2 billion within a couple generations as a result of population growth, changes in land use, economic development and climate change. Such increased vulnerability hinders sustainable development, the eradication of poverty and sustainable growth.

Natural hazards are inevitable, but high mortality and destruction tolls are not. In order to protect and sustain development gains, the international community is shifting the paradigm from emergency response to risk reduction. Not only social and economic assets need to be protected from external shocks, but development itself needs to be redesigned so that risks are reduced and resilience is strengthened.

Water resources and how they are managed affect almost all aspects of society and the economy: human health, food and energy production, industrial development and the functioning of ecosystems. Dealing with too little water, too much water or water of compromised quality requires cooperation of all sectors, including across borders.

There is a broad recognition of these principles: awareness and capacities have increased, and policies, laws and budgets have been put in place. However, these responses have not kept up with the pace of demographic growth, globalization, urbanization and environmental degradation, and losses from water related disasters have continued to increase.

There is therefore the need to step up efforts and catalyse actions by all relevant players to secure a world safe from water-related disasters.

The coming year, and in particular the 69th session of the UN General Assembly, offers extraordinary opportunities to design a common global agenda to prompt such efforts. A strong focus on water and on disaster risk reduction in the post-2015 agenda and in the future Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

will be the key. The successor of the Hyogo Framework for Action to be adopted at the third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (Sendai, 14-18 March 2015) will also provide a fundamental roadmap. Moreover, strong inter-linkages between the future SDGs, the successor of the Hyogo Framework for Action and the future global climate regime will be needed to secure risk-robust development achievements.

Objectives

The High-level special event will raise awareness and strengthen political commitment to reducing risks from water-related disaster. It will foster a discussion on key factors of success to address water-related disasters and the role of different stakeholders. It will explore the needed cooperation and synergies at different levels, including within the UN system. It will also allow debating the importance of specific means of implementation, including monitoring, financing and partnerships with the private sector.

Programme

The High-level special event would be moderated by **H.E. Ms. Margareta Wahlström**, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Speakers will include:

- **H.E. Mr. Sam Kutesa**, President of the sixty-ninth session of the UN General Assembly
- **H.E. Mr. Ollanta Humala Tasso**, President of Peru
- **H.E. Mr. Didier Burkhalter**, President of the Swiss Confederation and Foreign Minister of Switzerland
- **H.E. Mr. Qohir Rasulzoda**, Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan
- **H.E. Mr. Sihasak Phuanketkeow**, Acting for the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand
- **H.E. Ms. Helen Clark**, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme
- **H.E. Mr. Michel Jarraud**, Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization and Chair of the UN-Water

The speeches will be followed by a high-level discussion with participation of the country delegations, representatives of international and regional organizations, civil society and the private sector.

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