



DISASTER RISK-INFORMED AND RESILIENT COVID-19 RECOVERY

**Virtual Side Event at the 75th Session of the General Assembly
Second Committee
3pm-5pm EDT – Thursday 15 October 2020**

**Organized by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)
in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office of the High
Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS (OHRLS), and UN Women**

CONCEPT NOTE

- **SETTING THE SCENE**

Today's risk landscape is rapidly changing, and risk has become progressively more systemic. New interactions between environmental, economic, technological and biological risks are emerging in ways that were not anticipated. One hazard can trigger another with cascading impacts across systems and borders and devastating impacts on progress across the SDGs. However, policies, institutions and financing remain focused on preparing for and responding to disasters, rather than preventing the creation of risk and subsequent losses. To achieve the SDGs, current, emerging and future risks need to be considered in policy and investment decisions in all sectors.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis exemplify the systemic nature of risk and the potential for cascading impacts. COVID-19 has triggered an unprecedented social and economic catastrophe on a global scale. Decades of development progress have unraveled, and poverty and inequality, particularly gender inequality, have deepened. As a consequence, vulnerability and exposure to other hazards, including the intensifying climate crisis, have greatly increased with impacts foreseen long into the future.

While these hazards and risks affect all countries, the poorest and most exposed and vulnerable people, communities and countries bear the brunt. Despite strong commitment to disaster risk reduction, LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS continue to suffer disproportionately high losses in human and economic terms owing to disasters. The Sendai Framework Monitor shows that LDCs are recording more than 40% of deaths and missing persons and 48% of persons with livelihoods disrupted or destroyed due to disasters. They also suffer 17% of reported economic loss due to disasters and 14% of reported destruction or damage to critical infrastructure although they account for only 1% of GDP of countries reporting.

For countries in special situations, where disaster risk is concentrated, achieving the SDGs will be contingent on the effectively implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It will be critical that policies and programmes for structural transformation, economic diversification and the expansion of productive capacities are informed by current, emerging and future disaster risks, including climate and pandemic risks.

Decent work is an important component of such a risk-informed approach. As exemplified by COVID-19, deep rooted and pre-existing decent work deficits wrought by informality, gender inequality, limited social protection, skills gaps, and inadequate infrastructure have increased exposure and vulnerability to disasters. Small and medium enterprises are always dealt a particularly heavy blow during disasters, with impacts that ripple across the economy.

- **A RISK-INFORMED AND RESILIENT DEVELOPMENT TRAJECTORY THROUGH COVID-19 RECOVERY**

The COVID-19 pandemic is a watershed moment for disaster risk reduction in all sectors. Amidst the loss and destruction of disasters, recovery and rehabilitation provide transformative opportunities to achieve sustainable development policy objectives by injecting a risk-informed and prevention-oriented approach into a country's development trajectory. COVID-19 recovery is a crucial moment to change the trajectory of development from one that unintentionally creates risk to one that purposefully reduces risk and builds resilience for current and future generations. Through recovery and rehabilitation policies and investments that are disaster risk-informed, countries can build back better in a manner that addresses the underlying socioeconomic risk drivers that create vulnerability and exposure, particularly the scourge of gender inequality.

Investing in the future through an employment-lens can also ensure that job opportunities are created in the recovery and rehabilitation for those who are most affected. When new job opportunities provide decent and safe work, support the resilience of their employees and communities, and take current and emerging risks into consideration they can be a catalyst for the socioeconomic transformation needed to achieve the SDGs. The application of the Sendai Framework, and its core provision to "Build Back Better", in COVID-19 recovery and rehabilitation is therefore critical to prevent the next pandemic and to promote innovative and equitable socioeconomic recovery and rehabilitation solutions that eliminate inequality and reduce disaster risk.

- **THE POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR RISK-INFORMED DEVELOPMENT**

The Sendai Framework is the agreed global policy blueprint for reducing disaster risk and building resilience. It puts forward an approach for understanding and managing systemic risk across multiple hazards, including climate-related and biological hazards. It gives clear guidance for prevention that moves the focus from managing disaster events and their impacts to managing disaster risk by reducing existing risk and preventing the creation of new risk.

The Framework recognizes the importance of promoting a culture of risk reduction and resilience in workplaces through structural and non-structural measures. Business, small and large alike, are called on to integrate disaster risk reduction into continuity plans and business models and practices throughout supply chains. ILO Recommendation No. 205 on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience provides guidance on decent work and resilient, healthy and safe workplaces. Women and their participation are critical to the effective implementation of the Sendai Framework and in designing and implementing gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction policies, plans and programmes. Their capacity to secure alternate means of livelihood in post-disaster situations is paramount.

In recent years, the General Assembly's Second Committee has made a clear call for disaster risk reduction to be integrated in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and has recognized that national disaster risk reduction strategies are essential for the achievement of the SDGs¹. The Second Committee has also highlighted the invaluable contribution of disaster risk reduction in ensuring all public and private investments for sustainable development are risk-informed²; in preventing desertification and biodiversity loss³; and in achieving the development objectives of LDCs, LLDCs, MICs, and SIDS⁴. The Fifth United Nations Conference on LDCs, to be held in Qatar in 2022, and its preparatory process could provide an opportunity to address risk in a systemic manner over the next decade and beyond. The Political Declaration of the 2019 SDG Summit clearly recognizes disaster risk reduction as a priority of the Decade of Action. It is critical to support Governments to turn these intergovernmental decisions on disaster risk reduction into action through development investments and economic, social and environmental policy at all levels and in an integrated and coherent manner.

- **OBJECTIVE OF THE SIDE EVENT**

The objective of the side event is to: i) raise awareness that limited attention to risk reduction in sustainable development policy, including economic policy, and public and private investments is compromising the achievement of the SDGs; ii) encourage Member States and stakeholders to apply the Sendai Framework in COVID-19 response and socio-economic recovery and rehabilitation policies and strategies in order to embark on a risk-informed and sustainable trajectory moving forward; and iii) to share promising national experience in implementing the Sendai Framework and reducing disaster risk.

The side event will support countries in taking forward recent Second Committee decisions on a disaster risk-informed approach to sustainable development and the achievement of the SDGs. As the end of 2020 is the deadline for Target E of the Sendai Framework, for countries to have national and local disaster risk reduction strategies in place, the event will be an opportunity to take stock of progress and encourage countries to use the development of national disaster risk reduction strategies to guide a resilient, risk-informed, and inclusive COVID-19 socio-economic recovery.

- **GUIDING QUESTIONS**

1. What immediate and medium-term measures can Governments take to embark on a development trajectory that reduces rather than creates risk?
2. What are the challenges and obstacles to applying systemic understanding of risk in development policy and investments and what measures are needed to support the public and private sectors to overcome them?
3. What actions can Governments take to ensure that COVID-19 recovery and rehabilitation is disaster risk-informed, inclusive, gender responsive, and addresses the underlying social and economic drivers of disaster risk?
4. What type of regulations standards and legislation are need, including in the workplace, to reduce disaster risk?

¹ A/RES/74/218

² A/RES/74/199

³ A/RES/74/220; A/RES/74/219; A/RES/74/221

⁴ A/RES/74/232; A/RES/74/233; A/RES/74/231; A/RES/74/217

5. How can Governments and the private sector better access existing financing and disaster risk information to ensure policies and investments are risk-informed?

BACKGROUND READING

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2020

<https://www.preventionweb.net/sendai-framework/sendai-framework-for-drr>

2020 Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the Sendai Framework

<https://www.undrr.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/2020%20SG%20Report%20on%20the%20Implementation%20of%20the%20Sendai%20Framework.pdf>

2019 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction

<https://gar.undrr.org/sites/default/files/gar19distilled.pdf>

COVID-19: Opportunities for Resilient Recovery in Asia-Pacific

<https://www.undrr.org/publication/undrr-asia-pacific-covid-19-brief-opportunities-resilient-recovery>

COVID-19: A risk context in the Americas

<https://www.undrr.org/publication/undrr-americas-caribbean-magazine-covid-19-risk-context>

COVID-19: Preliminary Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa

<https://www.undrr.org/publication/covid-19-brief-preliminary-evidence-sub-saharan-africa>

Political Declaration of The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development Convened Under the Auspices of the General Assembly (paragraphs 12, 20 and 27(f))

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsummit#outcomes>

ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development Intergovernmentally Agreed Conclusions and Recommendations (paragraphs 3, 6 and 8)

<https://undocs.org/en/E/FFDF/2020/3>