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**TOWARDS RISK-RESILIENT DEVELOPMENT:
TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS
AND NATURAL CONSTRAINTS**

**Background paper submitted by the co-Rapporteurs
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Introduction

1. Sustainable development aims to meet human needs while ensuring the sustainability of natural systems and the environment. In this way, needs can be met not only at present but also for generations to come. Clearly, sustainable development emphasizes economic, environmental and socio-political sustainability, as well as human rights.¹
2. The Rio Declaration agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, underscores two critical elements of sustainable development: the need for sustainable patterns of production and consumption – which is the hallmark of a green economy; and the need to address population dynamics.²
3. Twenty years later, in June 2012, the United Nations convened a Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as Rio+20, to assess progress and challenges in order to move forward by boosting political commitment to issues of global concern to sustainable development. The Conference reaffirmed the important linkages between sustainable development and population dynamics. Population dynamics and related population issues were emphasized in both the Outcome Document of Rio+20, The Future We Want, and the subsequent report of the United Nations Task Team, Realizing the Future We Want for All.³
4. Climate change and disasters are among the issues identified as challenges to sustainable development facing the global community. These pose growing threats to people's lives, livelihoods, economic growth, environment sustainability and social equity. Inversely, sustainable development should reduce risks such as climate change.

¹ See the outcome documents of the UN Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm (1972) and the UN Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro (1992).

² Principle 8 of the Rio Declaration states: "To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, States should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies". For purposes of comparison, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action provides: "To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, States should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate policies, including population-related policies, [...]".

³ UN General Assembly Resolution 66/288 of 2012.

5. Additionally, Rio+20 identifies reproductive and sexual health and the promotion and protection of related human rights, including access to family planning services, as key elements of sustainable development, and reaffirms the importance of full implementation of the commitments undertaken in this area in the Beijing Platform for Action and the ICPD Programme of Action, adopted in Cairo, Egypt, in 1994. Inversely, a development model that includes social equity and women's empowerment will be conducive to family planning and help address population dynamics.

6. Climate change and disaster risks, together with population growth, represent a combined challenge to the achievement of sustainable development. Increasing disaster threats not only reflect the onset of events such as earthquakes or floods, but also the changing demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the population. Population growth and distribution, especially increased population density and urbanization, heighten vulnerability to disasters. In areas that are prone to drought-induced famine and malnutrition, the demographic factor has a direct effect on food security and self-sufficiency.

7. According to the UN-sponsored Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, human beings have impacted ecosystems more rapidly and extensively over the past 50 years than during any other period, primarily to meet increasing demands for food, fresh water, timber, fibre and fuel. The world's population is growing by about 78 million persons each year and according to the latest United Nations report on population prospects, the current world population of 7.2 billion is projected to increase by almost 1 billion within the next 12 years, reaching 8.1 billion in 2025 and 9.6 billion in 2050.⁴ Population growth is a crucial factor in the consumption and exploitation of natural resources, which can only in part be offset by technological advances and efficiency gains or by rebalancing the environmental footprint of developed and developing nations.

8. The scale of human and economic losses related to climate change and disasters is enormous. During the period 2000-2012, 1.2 million persons were killed directly in disasters and 2.9 billion persons were affected.⁵ Average annual economic losses provoked by natural hazards have more than tripled over the past three decades in real terms, amounting to US\$ 3.5 trillion dollars, which is probably a conservative estimate.⁶

9. An alarmingly rapid increase of exposure and vulnerability to natural hazards is taking place around the world. By way of example, the number of persons living in flood-prone river basins today has increased by 114 per cent and on cyclone-prone coastlines by 192 per cent. Further fast urbanization is expected to increase the world's urban population from 50 to 70 per cent by 2050 – almost doubling the population of the world's cities when combined with world population growth – with large numbers living in areas prone to seismic risk.⁷

10. In some Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, the growing risk of losing wealth in disasters is outstripping the rate at which the wealth itself is being created.⁸ Reducing disaster impacts has become a global concern as the 2011 floods in Thailand illustrate. The World Bank has estimated at 1,425 billion baht (US\$ 45.7 billion) the

⁴ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2013), World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision, Key Findings and Advance Tables. Working Paper No. ESA/P/WP.227.

⁵ UNISDR Disaster Impacts/2000-2012.

⁶ World Bank President, Jim Yong Kim, 10 October 2012, statement in Sendai, Japan.

⁷ UNISDR Global Assessment Report 2011.

⁸ UNISDR Global Assessment Report 2011.

economic damage and losses due to flooding, as of 1 December 2011.⁹ The disaster also prompted a number of insurance and reinsurance companies to pull out of the country, which caused a temporary estimated 2.5 per cent reduction in global industrial production.¹⁰

11. Unless disaster risk and vulnerability are reduced and population growth and the right to access family planning services are addressed, sustainable development cannot be achieved as sustainability demands risk resilience and the ability of nations and communities to cope with shocks.

International commitments

12. In order to address the two key interlinked components of climate change and disaster risk, on the one hand, and population growth and access to family planning on the other, global stakeholders have made commitments in the context of several international platforms.

13. To reduce disaster risk and impacts on people and development, 168 governments adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action¹¹ at the 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction and undertook to implement this key global instrument for reducing disaster risks. The aim is to build the resilience of nations and communities to disasters by achieving a substantial reduction of disaster losses by 2015.¹² Since the 2005 adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action, governments have reaffirmed their commitment to reducing disaster risks through regular resolutions of the UN General Assembly's Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee).

14. As a result, more national and local actions have been taken to reform legislation, policy and institutional frameworks. Multi-sector committees now coordinate different ministries and departments; responsibilities are decentralized to local government and dedicated budget lines are established, creating a more favourable and enabling environment for reducing risk and building resilience.¹³

15. There has been consistent progress in strengthening disaster preparedness and response; risk identification and early warning; and governance and institutional frameworks. More specifically, 85 countries now have multi-sector national platforms for disaster risk management. In all, 191 countries have a dedicated focal point for disaster risk reduction in central government. A total of 121 countries have enacted legislation to establish policy and legal frameworks for disaster risk reduction.¹⁴

16. However, countries have been less successful in achieving risk-sensitive investment: Less than half report having simple regulatory mechanisms for the provision of safe land and housing for low-income communities, risk-sensitive land zoning and private real estate development, or land titling. From that perspective, policies, frameworks and legislation have

⁹ The World Bank/Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, with development partners, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and over 40 other government agencies in Thailand, conducted a rapid needs and impact assessment of the floods of November 7-25, 2011.

¹⁰ Floods in Thailand last year threw 700,000 people out of work and had knock-on economic effects around the world. The Economist reports that US bank JP Morgan has estimated that the disaster set back global industrial production by a surprisingly high 2.5%. Economic exposure to floods is increasing faster than per capita GDP in all regions.

¹¹ The Hyogo Framework for Action is the first international framework for disaster risk reduction, with 3 strategic goals and 5 priority areas.

¹² Hyogo Framework for Action 2005.

¹³ UNISDR On-line HFA Monitor with 22 core indicators and 5 sets of priorities for action.

¹⁴ UNISDR Report on the Hyogo Framework for Action, 2013.

been largely marginal in addressing underlying risk drivers. A major gap exists between their development and implementation on the ground, which has so far been unable to reverse the growing trend towards greater disaster risk and economic losses.¹⁵

17. To address the issues identified and build on the momentum gained in disaster risk reduction, governments, through the UN General Assembly, decided to convene the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Japan in early 2015 to review progress and develop a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction to continue building the resilience of people and development to disasters.¹⁶

18. The Outcome Document of Rio+20 called for increased efforts and action in disaster risk reduction in line with the internationally agreed Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters.¹⁷ The year 2015 will offer a historic opportunity to address disaster risk and build disaster risk-resilient development towards sustainable development as both the post-2015 development agenda and the post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework will further provide global guidance and a framework for building disaster risk-resilient development.

19. To address the issue of access to contraceptives, a family planning summit was held in London in 2012, where more than 150 leaders from developing and donor countries, international agencies, civil society, foundations and the private sector united to make a global commitment to provide an additional 120 million women and girls in the world's poorest countries access to voluntary family planning services, information and supplies by 2020.

20. Today, more than 200 million women in developing countries want to avoid pregnancy but lack access to family planning and contraceptives. All women and girls have the right, and must have the means, to plan their own lives, including when and whether to have children. By enabling individuals to choose the number and spacing of their children, family planning can dramatically change how women seek education, empowerment and economic activity¹⁸, thus promoting disaster risk resilience.

21. By 2020, if an additional 120 million women who want contraceptives are able to get them, this would cumulatively result in more than 100 million fewer unintended pregnancies, as well as 3 million fewer babies dying in their first year of life and 200,000 fewer women and girls dying in pregnancy and childbirth. Unintended pregnancy is the single factor in continued population growth that is most amenable to programme and policy intervention. Family planning programmes have a successful track record of reducing such pregnancies, thereby slowing population growth.

22. The ICPD Programme of Action endorsed in 1994 by 179 countries will mark 20 years of promoting reproductive health and rights in 2014. After 20 years of work, a review process has been initiated to summarize the achievements of this initiative and to support the global community in setting priorities and shaping the post-2015 agenda. A high-level ICPD task force is currently reviewing the findings of regional global summaries conducted in 2012. These recommendations will be presented at the 69th session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2014.

¹⁵ UNISDR Report on the Hyogo Framework for Action, 2013.

¹⁶ UN General Assembly resolutions 66/199 and 67/209 of 2012.

¹⁷ UN General Assembly Resolution 66/288, The Future We Want, 2012.

¹⁸ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2011). World Contraceptive Use 2010 (POP/DB/CP/Rev.2010).

Defining disaster risk-resilient development

23. Disaster risk-resilient development is not only about protecting people's lives and livelihoods but also about social, economic and environmental sustainability, aiming to reduce socio-economic vulnerabilities to natural hazards. It is about building social, economic and environmental resilience through the systematic integration of disaster risk reduction into overall development planning, policy and programmes.

24. Disaster risk-resilient development requires a clear paradigm shift from a risk-insensitive development model to a risk-sensitive one, with disaster risk assessment recognized as a prerequisite for development planning. Disaster risk reduction must be an integral part of development planning, policy and programmes. By so doing, development will avoid generating new risks for people and communities by building instead their resilience to disasters.

Benefits of disaster risk-resilient development

25. Global implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action has accumulated a wealth of evidence that reducing risks builds resilience to disasters and protects the gains made in sustainable development around the three pillars: social equity, economic growth and environmental protection. Furthermore, it also contributes to good governance.

26. Increasingly, research reveals that disasters lead to a variety of social issues, including those related to food security, housing, health, education, deepening poverty and sometimes even political instability. Disaster risk-resilient development addresses social equity by reducing the social and economic vulnerabilities of people and communities to disasters. There are many good practices to demonstrate that applying disaster risk reduction to social development contributes to poverty reduction¹⁹, the promotion of gender quality²⁰ and the establishment of public facilities such as schools²¹ and hospitals.

27. Disaster risk-resilient development protects economic growth by applying disaster risk assessment to development planning and programmes. Risk-informed decision-making on development can protect lives and critical facilities from potential disasters, either by enhancing building codes or avoiding areas prone to natural hazards.

28. United States Agency for International Development (USAID) investment in disaster risk reduction has particularly high return rates, for example saving \$ 46 for every dollar invested in a small-scale water management project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.²² A World Bank study indicated that investing 1 dollar in disaster risk reduction will save seven. The development and financing of plans for building risk resilience across a wide-range of development sectors make good economic sense, and thus sustain economic growth.

¹⁹ UNISDR and UNDP publication on linking disaster risk reduction with poverty reduction, which demonstrates the role of disaster risk reduction in poverty reduction in 17 countries, including Bangladesh, Bolivia, Kenya, India, Malawi and Honduras.

²⁰ UNISDR publication, *Gender Perspectives: Working Together for Disaster Risk Reduction* (2007), in which good practices documented in 11 countries show how women can be empowered by playing an active role in the disaster risk reduction process.

²¹ Joint UNESCO-UNICEF publication, *Disaster Risk Reduction in School Curricula: Case Studies from 30 countries*, 2012.

²² Centre for Strategic and International Studies, *Economics of Disaster Prevention: Measuring the Costs and Benefits of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 2011.

29. Evidence shows that disaster risk-resilient development protects biodiversity and the environment and contributes to the reduction of the impact of climate adaptation. Research demonstrates how disasters lead to environmental degradation, which in turn reduces the capacity of ecosystems upon which many people depend. Integrating disaster risk reduction will help protect the environment and lead to healthy ecosystems, which directly provide livelihoods to many people around the world.²³

30. Resilience, the central goal of disaster risk reduction, is now becoming a guiding concept for the post-2015 development agenda as the global community plans beyond the Millennium Development Goals. The year 2015 offers a golden opportunity to strengthen the development agenda through a more explicit commitment to disaster risk reduction. More needs to be done to prioritize action on disaster risk-resilient development if dire humanitarian and economic and environmental consequences are to be avoided.

31. In a nutshell, countries should place both disaster risk reduction and governance at the centre of disaster risk-resilient development, with increased political commitment and financial investment in the post-2015 development agenda, and a clear focus on family planning and population dynamics.

²³ Disasters Environment Working Group for Asia: Linking Disaster Risk Reduction, Environment Management and Development Practices and Practitioners in Asia Pacific region: A review of Opportunities for Integration. A working paper, 2008 and the World Conservation Union, Ecosystems, Livelihoods and Disasters: An Integrated Approach to Disaster Risk Management. Ecosystem Management Series No. 4. 2006.