

FIFTH ARAB REGIONAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

□ *FROM RISK TO RESILIENCE: ACCELERATING LOCAL ACTION FOR DRR* □

8 - 11 November 2021, Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco

CONCEPT NOTE

BACKGROUND

The Arab Region is prone to a multitude of natural and man-made hazards, some of which are amplified and affected by climate variability and climate change. Over the past 50 years, droughts had the largest regional cumulative impact in terms of death, affected people and economic losses, with their frequency and severity being shaped by climate variability¹. Economic losses in the Arab region resulting from natural and man-made hazards accounted for almost \$60 billion in the past 50 years. Droughts have caused considerable losses to the rural poor inhabitants of Iraq, Morocco, Syria and Jordan, reflected in the decrease of land fertility, agricultural production and the loss of livestock and biodiversity^{2,3}. The arid and semi-arid conditions of many parts of the region, combined with natural and anthropogenic causes, have also led to sand encroachment. The accumulation of grains of sand at coastal areas, along water streams and cultivated and uncultivated lands have caused damages in infrastructure, mostly roads and buildings, loss of plantations and decrease of crop yields in countries like Algeria⁴. Wildfires are a problem in Mediterranean countries and as per local disaster loss databases, only in Lebanon more than 1,200 wildfires have been recorded since 1981.

Most recently, the Arab Region has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic which has affected the whole globe, with all Arab countries reporting on COVID-19 cases and deaths. The pandemic has proven to be far more than just a health crisis, affecting societies and economies in multiple ways. For the Arab region, projections show that almost 8.3 million people are likely to be thrown into poverty and that the region would lose at least \$42 billion in terms of GDP.⁵ While the impact of the pandemic varies from one country to another, it will most likely lead to increased poverty and exacerbated inequalities at a global scale, making achievement of SDGs even more urgent.

The COVID 19 pandemic has demonstrated how a local crisis can quickly cascade across sectors and countries, leaving devastating impacts on economies as well as the health and well-being of millions of people worldwide. It is an example of a systemic risk generated by the extreme levels of inter-connectivity in our world today. The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly increased our vulnerability and challenged the progress towards achieving sustainable development. It has provided a stark reminder on the importance of prevention and the risk reduction agenda.

¹ (CRED 2020)

² (FAO 2012)

³ (FAO 2019a)

⁴ (Boulghobra et al. 2015)

⁵ (ESCWA 2020)

THE SENDAI FRAMEWORK

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (Sendai Framework) addresses both natural and man-made hazards, including biological, environmental and technological hazards and risks. The Sendai Framework demands a whole of society approach in reducing risk and building resilience in our rapidly changing global risk landscape.

The Sendai Framework focuses on preventing the creation of new risks, reducing existing risks and strengthening resilience. It also calls for various measures to prevent and reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability; and increase preparedness and recovery. This requires a shift from stand-alone disaster management or risk management to a more holistic risk resilient development practice. This shift of thinking and action from risk management to disaster risk resilient development requires support of regional and international cooperation.

The Sendai Framework is a development framework that catalyzes the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. The SDG outcome document – ‘Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ – highlights the need for disaster risk reduction across several sectors. It is explicit in the outcome document of the SDGs that most of the goals are unattainable without addressing the exposure and vulnerabilities of people living in poverty. In order to achieve sustainable development through integration of disaster risk reduction in multiple development sectors, it is imperative that the member countries implement the Sendai Framework at all levels by adequately engaging multiple stakeholders through their risk informed development planning, implementation, and monitoring processes including on development and climate issues, as appropriate; and promote the integration of disaster risk management in other relevant sectors.

REGIONAL PLATFORMS FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Regional platforms bring governments and stakeholders together to raise the political commitment around disaster risk reduction, identify common priorities and challenges to address; periodically assess progress on implementation throughout the region; strengthen partnerships, share good practices and knowledge on disaster risk-informed policies, programmes and investments, including on development and climate issues, as appropriate; and promote the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction across all sectors. They are associated with a multi-stakeholder consultation process to foster an inclusive and all-of-society approach to disaster risk reduction at the regional level, including through the Arab Partnership for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 recognizes the Global and Regional Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction as key mediums for its implementation, building on the pivotal role that they have played in supporting the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

Regional Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction are multi-stakeholder forums that were developed incrementally after the Kobe Conference 2005. While they have varying characteristics, they all share the same traits as dynamic forums for policy-makers, partners, experts and practitioners to announce initiatives, launch products, share information, promote campaigns, monitor progress and provide evidence about disaster risk reduction.

The Sendai Framework also underscores the need for the Global Platform and Regional Platforms to function as a coherent system of mechanisms to fully leverage the potential of collaboration across all stakeholders and sectors to provide guidance and support in the implementation of disaster risk reduction programmes.

The Global and Regional Platforms serve as instruments to:

- Forge partnerships;
- Periodically assess progress on implementation;
- Share practice and knowledge on disaster risk-informed policies, programmes and investments, including on development and climate issues;
- Promote the integration of disaster risk management in other relevant sectors;
- Contribute to the integrated and coordinated follow-up processes to United Nations conferences and summits.

ARAB PLATFORMS FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Regional platforms and conferences in the Arab region started during the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Apart from the technical discussions, the platforms provided a unique opportunity for governments and stakeholders to reaffirm their commitment to reducing disaster losses through the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA). The platforms served as a forum to exchange experiences on successful DRR practices and innovative approaches.

To ensure the effective implementation of Sendai Framework and the Arab Strategy for DRR, UNDRR Regional Office for Arab States has been convening Arab Platforms on DRR, which have been providing a multi-stakeholder forum that brings together Arab Member States, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia, women, youth, civil society, UN organizations and other stakeholders. These platforms aim to review, and align the implementation of the Arab DRR Strategy 2030, its Programme of Work and Prioritized Action Plans to reduce risk and build the resilience of communities and nations to natural and man-made hazards. Furthermore, they aim to enhance disaster risk reduction efforts through exchange of experiences and better communication and coordination. These platforms provide a unique opportunity for governments to reaffirm their political commitment to implement the Sendai Framework and Arab Strategy for DRR.

The Arab regional meetings; including those held in Aqaba, Jordan; Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt; Doha, Qatar, and Tunis, Tunisia focused on issues related to local-level implementation of the HFA, shaping the Sendai Framework, updating the Arab DRR Strategy and its Programme of Work with prioritized actions for the period 2018-2020.

FIFTH ARAB REGIONAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Following the success of the Africa-Arab Regional Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction (Tunis, October 2018), and building on the outcomes of the 6th session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (Geneva, 2019), the Fifth Arab Regional Platform for DRR will be hosted by the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco and co-organized by United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction Regional Office for Arab States (UNDRR -ROAS) and the League of Arab States (LAS) in 2021 to build on the momentum in the political and technical dialogue towards disaster risk reduction in the region.

OBJECTIVE

The Fifth Arab Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction will be multi-stakeholder, inclusive, innovative, interactive and will take into account gender considerations in line with the Sendai Framework's guiding principle of an "all-of-society approach" to pursue the following objectives:

1. Take stock of progress made in the implementation of the Sendai Framework and Arab Strategy for DRR 2030 in the region and reaffirm political commitment to accelerate its implementation.
2. Identify viable approaches and mechanisms to advance the implementation of the Arab Strategy for DRR 2030 and define regional priorities for the following two years.
3. Provide the region with opportunities to share knowledge, experiences, and best practices around selected regional disaster risk reduction priorities and to forge innovative partnerships in advancing the

- Sendai Framework Targets, achieving resilient economies and building risk-informed sustainable development.
4. Consult on the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and provide recommendations for the 7th session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, to be held in Indonesia in May 2022.
 5. Promote complementarity and alignment of disaster risk reduction with climate change and sustainable development as well as the integration of disaster risk management in all relevant humanitarian, development and health sectors.

OUTCOME

The platform is expected to yield increased commitments of countries to enhance attention to risk-sensitive investments, showcase the progress made in national and local strategies and achievements in line with Sendai Framework. The outcomes of the Fifth Arab Regional Platform for DRR will also inform the 2022 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in New York and the 2022 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Specific outcomes based on regional perspective will be as follows;

- (i) A political declaration – consolidating the political commitment of governments towards preventing and reducing risk as well as strengthening resilience by accelerating the implementation and monitoring of the Sendai Framework and the Arab Strategy for DRR 2030 in the region and increasing government investments in disaster risk reduction;
- (ii) A set of renewed Stakeholders’ voluntary action statements on the implementation of the Sendai framework and Arab Strategy for DRR 2030;

- (iii) A Prioritized Plan of Action (2021-2024) for the Arab Strategy for DRR 2030 to accelerate the implementation of the Sendai framework in the Arab Region.

THEME

The theme of the Fifth Arab Regional Platform for DRR will be ***‘From Risk to Resilience: Accelerating Local Action for DRR’*** reflects the essence of the Sendai Framework.

The Sendai Framework clearly highlights in its guiding principles that, “While the enabling, guiding and coordinating role of national and federal State Governments remains essential, it is necessary to empower local authorities and local communities to reduce disaster risk, including through resources”. The COVID19 crisis underscored the importance of addressing risk management and preventive actions at the local and national levels and through a more systemic approach. While countries have put tremendous effort in developing their national and local strategies on DRR towards attainment of Target E of the Sendai Framework by 2020, it is now a critical imperative for countries to ‘accelerate’ the implementation of disaster risk reduction policies and strategies at all levels - and more crucially at the local level – in alignment with other global agendas.

The Fifth Arab Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction theme and topics will strive to identify innovative actions that enable Arab countries to lead a paradigm shift from standalone disaster management or risk management to more holistic risk resilient development practice. Moreover, the Ministerial gathering at the Platform will ensure countries’ commitment towards local resilience and its coherence with climate change, SDGs and the needed investment in development to reduce risk.

The Platform theme will assure direct link between disaster risk and broader development problems. The theme will address underlying risk drivers, such as poverty and inequality, poor living

conditions, unplanned urbanization processes, environmental degradation, lack of regulations and enforced “good development” practices at all levels and across all sectors. Having access to basic infrastructure and services – including risk-reducing infrastructure and services, good quality housing in safe locations, secure tenure, and income and livelihoods opportunities – reduces exposure and vulnerability and therefore, risk.

CONFERENCE STRUCTURE

Due to COVID-19 Pandemic, and reduced mobility, the structure of the Fifth Arab Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction will strive to ensure participation of attendees using various online.

The conference will be divided into two segments:

- **First Segment:** will consist of six-month virtual consultations from April to September 2021 which will cover:
 1. Consultations on the main ideas and themes of the platform,
 2. Consultations on the Prioritized Action Plan 2021-2024,
 3. Consultations with the identified stakeholder groups to prepare their voluntary action commitments,
 4. Consultations on drafting and finalizing the political declaration,
 5. Consultations on priority thematic issues and organization of thematic events: *(Based on the thematic focus areas above)*
- **Second segment** will consist of a four-day virtual conference with a Ministerial meeting on the fourth day.

The Platform is structured around plenaries and working sessions. The working sessions are structured around the four Sendai priorities and specific thematic issues and will feed into the countries’ statements. Such sessions have speakers

relevant to the topic, including national disaster risk reduction focal points, mayors, intergovernmental organizations, technical experts, and other development partners.

Interested partners are also invited to organize training workshops, side events and working sessions.

The platform will be comprised of plenaries, working sessions, special sessions, Ministerial meetings, and side events. The special sessions and working sessions will contribute to the plenaries and the plenaries will inform the declaration.

PARTICIPATION

The Fifth Arab Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction includes a Ministerial-level segment with a wide range of participants from governments (both national and local), civil society organizations, UN and international organizations, International Financial Institutions, media organizations, private sector organizations, academic and research institutions and development partners.

All the participants are required to register through the platform website:

[\(Fifth Arab Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction \(8-11 November 2021\): Event Page - Indico \(un.org\)\)](#).