

Official Statement of Local and Regional Authorities Major Group

at UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction,
Sendai, Japan, 17 March 2015, 10:00-13:00

Dear Secretary General,

Distinguished Ministers and Governmental Representatives,

Dear Mayors and Local Officials from around the world,

Dear colleagues and friends,

It is great pleasure for me to officially address the 3rd UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction here as Mayor of Banda Aceh in Indonesia, on behalf of the Local Authorities Major Group, and their global networks United Cities and Local Governments and ICLEI.

Allow me first to thank the hosts for the great hospitality that was shown to us during these days.

As we have seen four years ago, and as we see it every day all over the world, local authorities are the first level of response when a disaster happens, whatever the place and the country it occurs. When populations are hit, they directly call assistance to their local authorities. When you look at disasters tragedies, we see cities and villages destroyed and buildings collapsed, in urban areas, but also in rural areas.

The world has dramatically changed since the last Hyogo Framework for Action. Urban population now counts for over half of the population making urban centres the dominant habitat of humankind. This means that disasters are affecting a higher number of inhabitants in urban areas.

Even though progress has been made since the adoption of the first Hyogo Framework for Action, local authorities still lack enormous technical and financial and institutional capacities to be able to fully respond to this mission, especially in vulnerable areas in Asia-Pacific, in Africa and in Latin-America.

Dear colleagues, local authorities from around the world call for a true localisation of the new framework for action. Localizing actions in preventing the risks, localizing actions in the post-disaster recovery should be essential parts of the new action framework.

Cities are the first level of governance dealing with disaster risk reduction. Central governments must develop strategies together with local governments in order to build their capacities. This can only be done if decentralisation process in all countries is strengthened to give the necessary power and competences to local authorities.

Local governments need to be incorporated at the very early stages of national platforms and policies as governmental stakeholders. We will need to improve local-national dialogue to strengthen financial and technical capacities of local authorities to better evaluate, monitor and ensure reporting on disaster risks, particularly in the areas of technology, education and training.

United Cities and Local Governments, as World Organisation for Local Governments, has made since 2008 resilience a priority of its political and policy agenda. Over 1,000 cities have joined the the "Making Cities Resilient Campaign" with the support of ICLEI and UCLG to raise awareness and take concrete actions on disaster risk reduction. Since 2010, cities are meeting annually to monitoring their progress and have already been adopting charters that aim to synergize mitigation, adaptation, disaster risk reduction and sustainable development strategies

Dear Ministers, dear Colleagues, left unchanged, current development patterns and behaviours could contribute to social, environmental and economic degradation and injustice. We, local authorities, remain highly engaged and committed, individually and at the international level through our networks to make cities more resilient. But we will not make it alone and we urge governments, agencies and all relevant bodies to continue supporting local actions, cooperation and mutual learning for disaster risk reduction and the implementation of the framework.

Thank you.