

Event: World Ministerial Conference on Disaster Reduction

Date: 3 July 2012

Title: Panel discussion; "Promotion of international coordination system to assist disaster-affected countries".

Length: **Five minutes**

Madame chair. Today, I am happy to speak to Government leaders in my capacity as President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

With an increase both in the number, severity and complexity of disasters and in the number of actors at national, regional and global levels, stressing the importance of coordination is not rhetoric. Coordination needs to be a holistic and seamless part of the disaster management cycle, not only covering response during the emergency phase, but also preparedness and improved local resilience in the longer term.

Such comprehensive international coordination of humanitarian assistance is vital if we are to save lives and avoid wasting time and resources, but it has long been a challenge for humanitarian practitioners.

The IFRC is improving its own coordination and accountability, playing an active role in the Cluster system and supportive of the Transformative Agenda of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which seeks to improve humanitarian leadership, coordination and accountability.

In order to strengthen overarching coordination, the promotion and implementation of **domestic legal preparedness** and **local-level resilience** are the crucial building blocks on which international coordination can stand.

In 2007, the States Parties to the Geneva Conventions adopted the "Guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance". Using these guidelines, Governments can prepare themselves legally for the most common regulatory problems that arise in major disaster operations requiring international assistance.

Evidence has shown that effective domestic laws can reduce vulnerability to disasters and ensure effective response. They are also necessary if international aid is to be coordinated effectively and quickly – without it, bottlenecks can develop, resources can be squandered, and time can be lost at every stage of an operation. The Red Cross Red Crescent is ready to advise and support national authorities in developing strong disaster laws.

Disaster law goes hand in hand with **preparedness** at local levels - both are needed before disaster strikes, to help vulnerable individuals and their communities reduce and mitigate disaster risks, and give them the best chance of early recovery and greater resilience.

The IFRC has committed to dedicating ten per cent of the budget of our disaster appeals to programmes and actions that strengthen long-term resilience in disaster-affected communities. Such investments are highly cost effective and have higher returns than either disaster relief operations or humanitarian assistance immediately following a crisis.

Seventy per cent of our one hundred and eighty-seven Red Cross and Red Crescent societies have disaster preparedness and risk reduction programmes to protect and empower vulnerable people. These are implemented by dedicated volunteers who live within communities and are there before, during and after a disaster.

Such volunteer-led action can eliminate disaster risks altogether, or reduce their occurrence and severity where primary prevention is not possible. I encourage Governments to create a safe and enabling environment that protects, promotes and recognizes the work of all volunteers. And the disaster preparedness agenda should, I believe, be mainstreamed in the upcoming discussions on the next generation of Millennium Development Goals.

When a disaster cannot be prevented, survival and recovery prospects can be improved by national domestic laws, the resilience of local communities, and effective international coordination.

As Government leaders, you have the power to ensure legal preparedness for disaster. The Red Cross Red Crescent has the ability and volunteer base to ensure local-level resilience through our National Societies' role as auxiliary to Government.

Together, we can work hand in hand to better protect people and give them a safer future if we act in a coordinated manner to build bridges across established divides. We can achieve this with international understanding of our shared goal.