
Making States resilient to disasters and climate risks

Key Note – 22nd Economic and Environmental Forum

How can we make states resilient to disasters and climate risks?

Resilience has become a buzzword and many concepts concerning Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) are referring to resilience. The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) refers to the concept of resilience by stating its aim: “Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters”, and the framework describes in priority three a number of activities. Quite a number of definitions for resilience are existing and they highlighting different aspects. For example, UNISDR defines resilience as resistance to disasters, ability to recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely manner, preservation and restoration of basic structures. For others resilience to natural hazards consists of three pillars: resistance, recovery and adaptive capacity. Other definitions highlight the ability to learn from disasters as one of the main aspects of resilience. As a result, the term resilience is used in many different ways and it is often not clear what resilience actually means.

Resilience is obviously the result of different factors, there is an economic, political and social dimension of the term resilience, and it describes a status rather than a process. Livelihood for example of an important factor when increasing resilience and wellbeing is another one. In addition, social protection and good governance do play an important role. Hence, these factors need to be taken into consideration when communities and states want to become more resilient.

Nevertheless, these different factors of resilience also require concerted action of different levels and actors. Hence, increased resilience is a result of comprehensive efforts, which need to be deeply rooted at all levels. Efforts for increased resilience have to come from a society itself and it seems difficult to “make” a society resilient. Resilience is a result of factors that deeply rely on culture and society. Individuals, communities and states have to develop their own specific strategy to influence the factors for resilience.

Communities with economic stability, social services, social protection and good governance will be resilient. These communities will also be in a position to apply all the tools resulting from the Disaster Management such as prevention and preparedness as well as emergency response and reconstruction, which makes them even more resilient.

These factors are also very much connected to the concept of sustainable development and this is in line what UNISDR proposed as elements for the new Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA). “The expected outcome of the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction should not be described only in terms of reduced loss but rather in positive and aspirational terms such as secure, healthy,

wealthy and resilient nations and communities.” The new HFA will strengthen the efforts on the local, national and international level to foster resilience by making a link to the SDGs.

Due to climate change, extreme weather events are likely to appear more often with an increased intensity. This means that our capacity to learn natural disasters has to go beyond the reference to the past but we have to anticipate the impact of future disasters. Currently predictions are still uncertain as the second report of the IPCC outlines. Therefore, climate change adds another risk that need to be considered when working on the resilience factors and disaster risk reduction.

Resilience cannot be seen a tasks for a community or a state only. Disasters do not stop at borders, and comprehensive efforts are required to extend and improve coordination and cooperation of the international community for increased resilience. The existing HFA and new HFW will provide tools, methods and guidance on how international cooperation and coordination for increased resilience can achieved.

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