

Summary of the High-Level Meeting on the Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction: 17-19 May 2023

Eight years after the adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), the international community convened to assess progress on its implementation. Taking place at “a defining point in history,” and against the backdrop of a global “polycrisis,” delegates called for better governance, investments in resilience, and a focus on disaster prevention.

The Sendai Framework expires in 2030 at the same time as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The High-Level Meeting of the Sendai Midterm Review addressed these linkages, with many reinforcing the centrality of disaster risk planning to achieving the SDGs. Delegates adopted a Political Declaration reflecting this theme, with renewed commitment to work across and align with various international agendas, particularly those on climate and biodiversity. During the three-day conference other initiatives were established to bolster this work, including the UN Office for DRR (UNDRR) Investment Advisory Board aimed at de-risking the financial sector.

When adopted in 2015, the Sendai Framework aimed to enhance understanding, governance, investment, and preparedness for disasters at all levels. In recent years, however, the frequency, strength, and unpredictability of natural hazards has continued to increase. Delegates at the Midterm Review provided ample examples of the growing challenges of managing not just major hazards, but also smaller ones, especially where basic capacities for emergency response or data collection are limited, and in the case that multiple hazards occur in sequence. The purpose of the Sendai Framework has never been more important for promoting social cohesion, addressing planetary boundaries, and improving economic stability.

The High-Level Meeting on the Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework was held from 17-19 May 2023 at UN Headquarters in New York in a blended format of informal and formal events. Delegates convened in a Risk Reduction Hub that included standing-room-only roundtable events over the three days, and a high-level meeting under the auspices of the UN General Assembly that included a formal plenary, a Leaders’ Roundtable lunch, and a day of multi-stakeholder panels on core issues. Delegates adopted a Political Declaration that focuses on understanding and investing in DRR, strengthening governance and preparedness, and “building back better.”

A Brief History of the Sendai Framework

Natural hazards, such as floods, droughts, earthquakes, and tsunamis, are becoming more frequent and intense, increasing the impact on people and communities. Compounding the situation, poor planning, poverty, and a range of other underlying factors create conditions of vulnerability that result in insufficient capacity to cope with natural hazards and prevent disasters. Action to reduce risk has grown in importance on the international agenda and is seen by many as essential to safeguard sustainable development efforts and achieve the SDGs.

DRR includes all the policies, strategies, and measures that can make people, cities, and countries more resilient to hazards, and that reduce risks that lead to disasters. Recognizing that natural hazards can threaten anyone unexpectedly, UNDRR builds on partnerships and takes a global approach to disaster risk reduction, as well as a whole-of-society, people-centered approach at the national level. With the adoption of the Sendai Framework in 2015 the scope of DRR broadened significantly, and now includes a focus on both natural and anthropogenic hazards and related environmental, technological, and biological hazards and risks.

First World Conference on Disaster Reduction: The first World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) convened in Yokohama, Japan, in 1994, and saw the adoption of the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World and a Plan of Action. The Yokohama Strategy set guidelines for action on prevention, preparedness, and mitigation of disaster risk. These guidelines were based on principles of risk

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assessment, disaster prevention and preparedness, the capacity to prevent, reduce, and mitigate disasters, and early warning. The strategy also stated that the international community should share technology to prevent, reduce, and mitigate disasters, while demonstrating strong political determination in the field of disaster risk reduction.

International Strategy for Disaster Reduction: At its 54th session in 1999, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) agreed to establish the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), and an Inter-Agency Secretariat and Task Force for Disaster Reduction (IATF/DR) for implementation of the ISDR (resolutions 54/219 and 56/195, respectively). Among its mandated tasks, the IATF/DR was to convene ad hoc expert meetings on issues related to disaster reduction.

Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction: The second WCDR convened from 18-22 January 2005 in Kobe, Japan. The 168 states attending the conference adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters (HFA) and the Hyogo Declaration. UNGA resolution 60/195 endorsed the HFA and committed governments to five priorities for action to:

- ensure DRR is a national and local priority, with a strong institutional basis for implementation;
- identify, assess, and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning;
- use knowledge, innovation, and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels;
- reduce the underlying risk factors; and
- strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.

Global Platform for DRR: In 2006, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs launched a consultative process to consider practical ways of strengthening the ISDR system to support governments in meeting their commitments to implement the HFA. It aimed to extend participation of governments and organizations, raise the profile of disaster reduction, and construct a more coherent international effort to support national disaster reduction activities. The Global Platform for DRR was formed as an expanded and reformed successor to the IATF/DR, envisioned to serve as the primary multi-stakeholder forum for all parties involved in DRR to raise awareness of DRR, share experiences, and guide the ISDR system. Four sessions of the Global Platform convened between 2007 and 2013.

Third UN World Conference on DRR: This meeting convened from 14-18 March 2015 in Sendai, Japan, and adopted the Sendai Framework for DRR 2015-2030. The Sendai Framework aims to achieve substantial reduction of disaster risk and loss of lives, livelihoods, and health as well as of losses in the economic, physical, social, cultural, and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities, and countries. The Sendai Framework contains four priorities of action (understanding disaster risk; strengthening disaster risk governance; investing in DRR; and enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “build back better” in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction) to achieve a set of seven global targets. The targets include specific references to lowering the rates of mortality and people affected by disaster, loss in relation to global gross domestic product (GDP), and the damage to critical infrastructure and services. They also target the substantial enhancement of international cooperation and finance. The scope of the DRR expanded to include both natural and

anthropogenic hazards and related environmental, technological and biological hazards and risks.

Fifth Session of the Global Platform: This meeting convened from 24-26 May 2017 in Cancún, Mexico, under the theme “From Commitment to Action,” and was attended by more than 5,000 delegates from over 170 countries. A key outcome of the meeting was the release of the Cancún High-Level Communiqué. Under the theme “Ensuring the resilience of infrastructure and housing,” the Communiqué commits to, *inter alia*: implement the Sendai Framework in coherence with the SDGs, the Paris Agreement on climate change, and the New Urban Agenda; and promote people-centered, gender-sensitive, accessible, and resilient urban development that supports all of society, including the vulnerable, poor, and marginalized. The fifth session also issued a Chair’s Summary, which was forwarded to the July 2017 session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).

Sixth Session of the Global Platform: This meeting took place from 13-17 May 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland, under the theme “Resilience Dividend: Towards Sustainable and Inclusive Societies,” and included the first UNDRR Stakeholders Forum. A major outcome was the launch of the 2019 Global Assessment Report on DRR, which provides an overview of countries’ progress toward achieving the seven global targets of the Sendai Framework. The session adopted a Chair’s Summary comprising recommendations for the Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework, and for DRR to be fully integrated into implementation of the SDGs.

Regional Platforms: The eighth Africa Regional Platform for DRR was held on 16-19 November 2021 in Nairobi, Kenya, under the theme “Towards Disaster Risk-Informed Development for a Resilient Africa in a COVID-19 Transformed World.” The first part of the meeting, held virtually from 16-18 November, focused on progress and ways to deliver on commitments under the Sendai Framework and the African Union’s Programme of Action, and, thus, contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. On 19 November, the seventh High-Level Meeting on DRR was held in a hybrid format where ministers responsible for DRR and heads of delegations adopted the outcomes of the Regional Platform.

The fifth Arab Regional Platform for DRR was held virtually from 8-11 November 2021 under the theme “From Risk to Resilience: Accelerating Local Action for DRR.” The platform adopted the Rabat Declaration for DRR, calling on all Arab governments, partners, and stakeholders to integrate and align DRR strategies and programmes with sustainable development policies at all levels.

The seventh Regional Platform for DRR in the Americas and the Caribbean was held virtually from 1-4 November 2021 under the theme “Building resilient economies in the Americas and the Caribbean.” The meeting also comprised the fourth High-Level Meeting of Ministers and Authorities on the Implementation of the Sendai Framework in the Americas and the Caribbean. In addition, the meeting convened a special Youth Forum on DRR and approved new steps to strengthen a regional action plan on DRR and achieve the goals of the Sendai Framework.

The 2021 European Forum for DRR was held in Matosinhos, Portugal, on 24-26 November 2021. The meeting featured a Ministerial Roundtable where governments endorsed the Forum’s Roadmap 2021-2030 for coordinated and accelerated implementation of the Sendai Framework and related SDGs in Europe and Central Asia.

Seventh Session of the Global Platform for DRR: The seventh session of the Global Platform took place on 23-28 May 2022 in Bali, Indonesia, under the theme “From Risk to Resilience: Towards Sustainable Development for All in a COVID-19 Transformed World” and was organized across three main sub-themes on disaster risk governance, COVID-19 recovery, and DRR financing. The meeting also addressed the Sendai Framework stocktaking for the ongoing Midterm Review; deliberated on actions to reduce disaster risk for and engage with the most vulnerable, including Indigenous Peoples, women, youth, and persons with disabilities; and highlighted potential synergies with the sustainable development and climate action agendas and policies.

Report of the Meeting

On Thursday, UN General Assembly President Csaba Kőrösi opened the High-Level Meeting on the Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework, under the theme “Working Together to Reduce Risk for a Resilient Future.” In an opening segment, high-level UN officials stressed the need to reconsider strategies on investment and accounting based on GDP, policy coherence to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, and equity in preparedness across geographies and income levels. Delegates then adopted the Political Declaration of the Sendai Framework Midterm Review 2015-2030.

Throughout the day and into the evening delegates met in plenary under the theme “Charting liveable pathways for humans and nature.” Three Heads of State emphasized the importance of DRR in their countries and regions, followed by statements by government ministers and other high-level officials. In their statements, delegates shared national perspectives on implementation of the Sendai Framework and activities to advance risk-informed action.

Key themes that emerged during these interventions included: progress to date on the Sendai Framework; the impact of recent crises; the use of data, science, and technology; early warning systems; linkages with other UN processes; multi-stakeholder involvement and collaboration; and solidarity between countries and communities.

For more details about Thursday’s proceedings, see enb.iisd.org/midterm-review-sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-daily-report-18may2023.

Leaders’ Roundtables: On Thursday, delegates attended a productive “working lunch” co-hosted by UNDRR and UNGA President Csaba Kőrösi. Mami Mizutori, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for DRR and Head of UNDRR, said the aim of the roundtables was to embody a whole-of-society approach to identifying the “game changers” that can revolutionize how we can act on risk.

For more details, see enb.iisd.org/midterm-review-sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-daily-report-18may2023

Multi-stakeholder Panels

On Friday, delegates convened in four themed multi-stakeholder panels. These panels combined formal presentations with interventions from delegates on the floor.

Panel One: From Managing Disasters to Managing Risk – Risk Governance fit for the 21st century: Panel moderator Emilia Saiz, Secretary-General, United Cities and Local Governments, said we have learned a lot since 2015. She highlighted growing awareness of the critical need for local engagement and participation, more coordination, and investment.

The first outlined findings of the Midterm Review, including that only two of seven Sendai Framework targets are showing improvement and we are not on track to meet the 2030 targets. It highlighted gaps or inadequacies in understanding risk, governance, financing, investment, and early warning systems. The second video observed that conventional governance systems are not equipped to deal with growing complexity, stating that we need new policies and frameworks that integrate risk reduction across countries, institutions, and sectors.

Achim Steiner, Administrator, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), said our world today is characterized by uncertainty and “polycrisis.” Reflecting on the COVID-19 pandemic, he said it had demonstrated how conventional systems need to be updated. He recommended placing risk management and governance at the center of planning and policy processes, as well as using an “anticipatory approach.” He urged fully implementing the regulatory, legal, and policy recommendations of the Sendai Framework, stating that failing to build resilience would be “the biggest risk of all.”

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Member of Parliament, Bangladesh, stressed the critical role of legislation and regulatory frameworks, observing that these need political ownership and will. Stating that parliamentarians cannot work in isolation, he said a whole-of-government approach has to involve a coalition of stakeholders.

Gertrude Rose Gamwera, Secretary General, East African Local Governments Association, said local governments are on the frontline not only in terms of disaster response, but in prevention, preparation, and early warning. She highlighted capacity building, stronger networks between local authorities and also with other stakeholders, and more coordination at the national level so local authorities can engage and participate.

Cristelle Pratt, Assistant Secretary-General, Department of Environment and Climate Action, Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, supported a “nested” approach to risk governance cutting across and between stakeholders at all levels. She supported inter- and intra-regional cooperation, and stressed effective communications.

Roger Pulwarty, Senior Scientist, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, US, highlighted the importance of community and local buy-in, early warning systems, and good data. He said that if we decentralize community-led solutions then we must also decentralize support. He highlighted the critical role of trust, which must be fostered if we are to collaborate across silos.

NORWAY said the use of data is important to reduce, adapt to, and manage risks. He supported the Early Warning Systems for All initiative, a whole-of-government and all-of-society approach, and incorporating a gender-perspective and rights-based approach.

MEXICO focused on the required political, regulatory, and institutional changes, offering examples of initiatives at the national level. He highlighted methodologies to assess vulnerability in national policies, stressing that risk reduction requires cross-cutting, committed actions.

The DOMINICAN REPUBLIC emphasized that, especially in Latin America, there is a lot of disparity regarding decentralization, stressing that local governments need more competence and economic resources and calling for a bottom-up approach. He further highlighted rapid urban expansion without the necessary regulatory framework, leading to loss of agricultural land, and cultural and environmental heritage, which affects food security.

The Province of Potenza, Italy, for SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENTS, highlighted the need for multi-stakeholder and all-of-society engagement. He underscored: inclusive and democratic participation in decision making; the need to invest in knowledge generation and innovation; national, regional, and international cooperation; and the need to improve our sense of belonging to our planet.

The YOUTH INNOVATION LAB focused on limited technical capacities and support needed for local governments, including to address data gaps. Calling for unlocking potential at the local level, he discussed the need for data sharing and ways to empower local governments, using the DRR and climate change fellowship programme in Nepal as an example.

The FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UN (FAO) underscored that business-as-usual pathways are not options in today's risk landscape to meet food security goals. Stressing the need to manage risk, not disasters, she noted that the agricultural sector's resilience depends on and influences the resilience of other sectors, urging maximizing co-benefits and synergies. She added that financing strategies can drive the necessary investments, calling for internalizing food systems' externalities driving risk creation.

LUXEMBOURG highlighted the need for a multi-sectoral programme and a network of knowledge and information, ensuring that strategies are based on best available scientific data. She underscored the importance of knowledge sharing for efficient risk governance, noting that the Sendai Framework allows us to bring necessary expertise on board. She urged taking into account interlinkages and interdependencies, noting that risk can only be managed in an inclusive manner.

SUDAN drew attention to multiple challenges at the national level, urging prioritizing the most vulnerable countries in infrastructure development and technology transfer. He appealed for support from international organizations, stressing that "working together, we will uphold the pillars of just governance and democracy."

In concluding remarks, the panelists stressed the need to: build the capacities and systems for effective risk governance; find solutions faster than the rate at which we are creating problems; strengthen the role of local governments and deepen decentralization policies; follow a whole-of-society approach; and reconfigure financing to incorporate resilience-related benefits.

Panel 2: De-risking investment and reconfiguring the global financial system moving from risk generation to risk reduction: Moderator Shari Spiegel, Chief, Policy Analysis & Development Branch, Financing for Sustainable Development Office, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, opened the panel.

Avinash Persaud, Special Envoy, Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Commission on the Economy, talked about "deep shocks," "hurtling towards key tipping points," and said a warming climate means more pandemics. He warned that the international financial system is not fit for a world of shocks. The Bridgetown Initiative, he said, was established because more shock-absorbing elements are needed in the global financial architecture. He said Barbados is the only country that issues pandemic clauses in bonds. On gaps, he drew attention to the need for USD 100 billion per year for resilience building, and low-cost, long-term lending, as well as the need for more capital available to development banks. He called for new funding in multilateral development banks to focus on resilience, and for the fossil fuel, shipping, and agriculture sectors to make their contribution.

Sanda Ojiambo, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), UN Global Compact, discussed how shocks have "an incredible and indelible" impact on the private sector. She said business leaders are no longer solely focused on profit and loss, and that these leaders are in a new and difficult position. She described the UN Global Compact's digitized reporting framework and its deep engagement with corporate sustainability frameworks.

Matina Papatasiou, QIC Global Infrastructure, elaborated on how private capital is available to address carbon and resilience issues in infrastructure and that significant investments are being made in the energy transition and decarbonization. For example, she said, global energy transition funding is reported to have topped USD 1 trillion, but multiples of this are required to reach net zero. She underlined that resilience needs to play a role in the development of this funding and that environmental, social, and governance frameworks are "a critical foundation" of any investment. She discussed the establishment of the UNDRR Investment Advisory Board, which will inform public-private partnerships, private capital, and private sector funding for the Sendai Framework. Best practices for resilient infrastructure and standards for climate resilience are important, she said, which can help investors determine risk impacts across various options and risk mitigation scenarios. She noted the release of the UNDRR Handbook for Implementing the Principles for Resilience in Infrastructure.

Claudine Blamey, Group Director of Sustainability, Aviva, commented that the role of finance is highlighted in the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement, and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and yet the global financial system "is contributing to our failure to achieve these targets." She suggested radical reform of the global financial system to break down silos, and clarify responsibilities, recommending that the global climate transition be part of this solution. She said risk is still being defined, and that most data are retrospective. She called for more future and scenario planning, and comprehensive understanding of systemic risks, quantified for disaster risk accounting in financial modeling and on balance sheets. She said adaptation should not be left out. Lastly, she emphasized the need for more awareness raising and education "so that those in the financial system can act."

Participants watched a video advocating for a systemic response in a world where disasters increase in frequency and severity. Discussing the need to incorporate risk considerations in public planning processes, Persaud commented on the need to think about the nature of risk and distinguish between insurable and uninsurable risks.

ALGERIA noted that the current approach to finance is not in line with increasing risk levels, urging a shift from investing in response to financing prevention and DRR. He called for collective action through the implementation of existing and innovative financial mechanisms.

PALESTINE focused on a national project to roll out insurance in agriculture, noting the value of community participation.

INDIA noted that unlike health insurance, disaster insurance does not work equally well as the impacts are complex and multifaceted. Discussing financing for disaster mitigation, he highlighted the need for earmarked funds for disasters and a national system for financing in cases of disasters, including funding for mitigation-related activities.

ZIMBABWE discussed mainstreaming DRR in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development at the national level, as well as providing a stimulus package for risk-informed behavioral change,

including for the private sector. He further highlighted the role of multilateral institutions for key infrastructure rehabilitation and community projects.

ARISE (a network of private sector companies committed to risk-informed development, DRR, and preparedness action) urged cross-sectoral approaches and removing legal and regulatory barriers that drive “risk-blind” investments. The INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM) described migrants and diaspora as “the unheralded financiers for development” and investment.

In response to a question from COLOMBIA about how to make resources and investments flow to countries and people who need them most, Ojiambo supported assessing how countries are profiled from a risk perspective. Blamey said a global carbon price would help bring investment in many areas, such as nature-based solutions.

Replying to a question from INDONESIA about lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, Papathanasiou said the pandemic had shown that we are all interconnected, people’s safety is paramount, and communication and innovation are critical.

Panel 3: Strategic foresight and risk reduction to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: This panel, moderated by Guy Ryder, UN Under-Secretary-General for Policy, focused on better applying risk analytics and strategic foresight to guide future-proof development strategies. Participants underscored that in times of change and uncertainty, strategic foresight will be crucial for informing effective resilience-building measures.

Participants watched a video on how strategic foresight and risk reduction can be used as tools to accelerate achieving the SDGs. Elizabeth Riley, Executive Director, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, stressed that any discussion on attaining the SDGs is in essence a systems discussion. She emphasized that leveraging strategic foresight will support SDG implementation in time of increasing change, complexity, and uncertainty. She suggested relevant pathways, including a requirement for technical assistance and financing to strengthen capacities of small island developing states (SIDS) for strategic foresight; capitalizing on spaces of multilateral dialogue to advance the agenda; and involving local communities in strategic forecasting.

Duncan Cass Beggs, Counsellor for Strategic Foresight, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), stressed that in times of rapid change and high uncertainty, strategic foresight is essential due diligence for DRR. He noted that simply looking forward is not enough and a broad look at different possible scenarios is needed, “stretching the frontier of what people can imagine.” Beggs focused on developments in the field of artificial intelligence (AI), analyzing relevant positive potential as well as involved risks. Cautioning that AI developers cannot make risk management decisions on behalf of humanity, he stressed that a strong voice from the DRR community is needed, demanding accountability.

Shalini Dhyani, Senior Scientist at Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), National Environment Engineering Research Institute, India, addressed the use of nature-based solutions (NbS) and ecosystem-based approaches to ensure more disaster- and risk-proof societies and ecosystems. He highlighted the need for building trust in an inclusive approach, providing relevant incentives, and focusing on monitoring, review, and verification. He further underscored the need for: involving the scientific community in decision making; customizing local-specific solutions;

raising awareness; filling data gaps; and enabling people-centered approaches through local consultation and needs-based assessments.

Maxime Stauffer, CEO, Simon Institute for Longterm Governance, Switzerland, noted that risk reduction and development are one package, although they were traditionally treated as separate domains. Noting that technological development may drive the creation of risk, he offered examples from the environmental field, biotechnology, and AI development, cautioning that in changing the environment, biology, and language, “we threaten our own existence.” He suggested: focusing on technological risk; fostering coordination and prevention; involving the private sector; and developing inclusive policies as technological development amplifies inequalities, which, in turn, amplify risks.

In the ensuing discussion, CHINA outlined national efforts on disaster risk assessment and reduction, stressing that high quality data integration is important to reduce disaster risk and promote sustainable development. She added that strong political will is required to turn foresight into action.

MEXICO shared national insights on forecasting, identification, and communication of risk. He stressed that risk awareness needs to involve civil society and the private sector, placing people at the heart of initiatives that are compatible with the human rights agenda. He further underscored the importance of international cooperation at all levels to promote common objectives and engage in awareness-raising activities.

INDIA discussed the need to balance AI and relevant potential benefits and costs. Analyzing similar debates on cryptocurrency, he concluded that people-centric approaches can, to some extent, mitigate some of the concerns surrounding rapid technological development. The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) highlighted its partnership with the International Science Council, including a foresight expert panel.

Responding to a question from INDIA about whether an excessive focus on risk might unintentionally prevent development opportunities, Stauffer said we should not view risks and opportunities as a trade-off, and Cass-Beggs said we should focus on benefits and risks simultaneously. He recommended more work assessing global risk, saying this “should not fall between the cracks.”

Panel 4: A collective responsibility - localising DRR, restoring context: Attendees first viewed a film on risk reduction. Moderator Xavier Castellanos, Under Secretary General for National Society Development and Operations Coordination, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), said local engagement is essential to dramatically scale up effectiveness of DRR. “In the first hours, it is local communities, families, neighbors, and friends who help each other, and local actors, like IFRC volunteers who are the first to provide support and are the last to leave,” he said. For DRR to be effective, an enabling environment for local leaders and authorities to participate in DRR decision-making processes is needed, and “governments have a lot to learn from these local perspectives.” He said funding is not reaching those who need it, with less than USD 1 per person in climate adaptation funding available in the most vulnerable countries and that only approximately 2% of all climate funding reaches the local level.

Kazuko Kohri, Mayor of Sendai, Japan, emphasized “building back better” is a first priority in DRR and that her city is on track with the implementation of the global targets but that “DRR is a never-ending task.” She emphasized the importance of local government.

Marcos Concepcion Raba, Executive Director, Global Network of Civil Society Organizations for DRR, said his organization's approach is centered on: data collection, reflection, and action, through different initiatives. He also discussed a flagship programme, Views from the Frontline, which gathers and collects perspectives of communities to understand underlying stresses and emerging risks, and presence and absence of risk governance that is implemented in more than 50 countries and more than 800 communities. He recommended identifying the role of civil society in national plans and incorporating local knowledge to risk reduction governance.

On efforts to integrate persons with disabilities into DRR governance, Martine Abel Williamson, President of the World Blind Union, said one out of four to five people are disabled in most countries. Disability and inclusive DRR can work well, she said, if the needs of disabled people are taken into account. She described Connect Four, a community and neighborhood initiative. She drew attention to the importance of disabled peoples' organizations creating checklists for risk reductions, on readiness, response, and recovery.

Relinda Sosa Pérez, Lead Representative, Huairou Commission, focused on the role that grassroots and women's organizations can play to address gaps in data and risk information. Providing examples of work with local authorities and stakeholders, she highlighted awareness-raising and resilience-building initiatives, noting that scant resources and limited political will constitute major obstacles. She called for institutionalizing participation mechanisms in decision making, stressing that governments have set terms and time limits, but communities face continuous risk. She emphasized that the voice of women is very important as they are at the frontline of risk and disasters and called for addressing the gender gap and accrediting women as experts in risk management, reconstruction, and local development.

Zimbabwe, for the GROUP OF FRIENDS OF UN-HABITAT, SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION AND THE NEW URBAN AGENDA, focused on sustainable urbanization, highlighting the New Urban Agenda, and stressing that investing in resilient cities has long-term benefits and will contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

SWITZERLAND underscored its national, long-standing engagement on localization, both domestically and under the framework of international cooperation. She called for open, free data, available to everyone to support intelligent decisions.

FINLAND stressed that for early-warning systems to be effective, they need to be actionable, down-scaled, and tailored to user needs. He highlighted the need to strengthen weather observation capacity and underscored that the wealth of traditional knowledge can strengthen the accuracy of warnings.

CHILE addressed national DRR efforts, including its national policy and strategic plan. She underscored the importance of a differentiated approach for vulnerable population groups and stressed that women should not be passive actors but agents of community work and protagonists in DRR strategies.

The STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT MECHANISM and ACTIONAID noted that localization has been recognized but not sufficiently progressed, calling for shifting the power towards local communities, particularly women, youth, disabled people, and other vulnerable groups. She underscored that strong partnerships are needed to move from words to action and build resilience to disasters and shocks.

ECUADOR said lack of political will and lack of necessary financing may sabotage all DRR actions, pointing to limitations in legal frameworks. He stressed that "we must move from political will towards political obligation to implement DRR on the ground," including earmarking necessary funds at all levels.

COLOMBIA underscored the importance of localization for DRR and the SDGs. She highlighted the inclusion of traditional knowledge, stressing that Indigenous Peoples are a legitimate source of knowledge and wisdom. She applauded UNDRR's work and called for the urgent adoption of a gender plan of action, taking into account the needs of women and girls.

INDONESIA discussed the importance of empowering communities and utilizing local knowledge and measures, noting his country's progress on gender mainstreaming, including persons with disabilities, child-friendly initiatives, and investing in resilient cities.

YEMEN underscored the significant impact of smaller disasters that are often disregarded. He said his country is a hotspot for issues linked to the Indian Ocean and two to three major disasters per year are related to ocean changes, yet it lacks resources to address them. He pointed to the non-binding nature of the Sendai Framework, the contribution strong ecosystems can provide to societies, and called for significant assistance and mechanisms at the national level.

GHANA said the media is a powerful tool for change and called for attention to its role in the implementation of the Sendai Framework, particularly on elevating risk reduction and prevention measures.

URUGUAY discussed national work on emergency risk reduction, early warning systems for cities, and resilient cities, saying they were not developed in silos.

LUXEMBOURG said it had established a working group of local and national authorities for promoting resilience at the local level and bolstering a bridge between scales for disaster management.

MAN UP CAMPAIGN/THE CREATORS 2030 highlighted silos on youth and Indigenous Peoples and the need for more attention on blue bonds.

CHINA discussed awareness raising, community mobilization, and dissemination of communication at the local level, including in schools.

In concluding remarks, Raba noted that local authorities may not know about the Sendai Framework and/or national plans for DRR, and that this needs to change.

Risk Reduction Hub

A Risk Reduction Hub coordinated by the UNDRR was held from Wednesday to Friday. The Hub served as a space for non-state actors and government representatives to discuss key themes for advancing risk reduction across sectors, regions, and contexts. The Hub addressed 18 topics:

- scaling-up risk sensitive urban development;
- disaster risk analytics: strengthening the DRR data ecosystem;
- human mobility in the context of disasters;
- accelerating action for gender responsive DRR;
- children as changemakers for resilience;
- SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (Samoa Pathway) and the Sendai Framework;
- infrastructure and engineering for DRR;
- intersectionality in DRR;
- synergizing climate action and DRR;
- risk-proofing sustainable development;
- private investment in DRR for resilience;
- whole of society approach and the role of non-state actors;

- DRR in countries affected by multidimensional crisis;
- Early Warnings for All;
- the role of states in promoting investments in DRR;
- DRR and education online;
- working with nature for resilience; and
- scaling up resilience and reducing disaster risk in landlocked developing countries.

For coverage of the Risk Reduction Hub on Wednesday see enb.iisd.org/midterm-review-sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-daily-report-17may2023

On Friday morning, delegates attended a Hub event titled **“Working with Nature for Resilience.”** This event was co-hosted by UNDRR, UNEP, and the Partnership for Environment and DRR (PEDRR). Malini Mehra, CEO, GLOBE International, moderated the event. Mehra noted that the title of the event “working with nature” implies that “we have been working against nature and undermining resilience.” She said that only by working with nature can we manage crises of today and tomorrow and emphasized scaling up NbS for resilience to ensure that implementation of the Sendai Framework for the next seven years will be nature positive. She noted that this event exemplified the interagency coordination that will be needed.

“Five years ago, we were not talking about nature as a risk driver nor about partnering with nature as a solution for risk reduction,” said Mami Mizutori, Special Representative of the Secretary General for DRR and Head of UNDRR, “but now we are seeing that convergence very strongly.” She continued, “We need to connect the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement, link it to the SDGs, and connect it to nature.” NbS are multi-pronged solutions, she said, stressing the importance of scaling them to produce the economic benefit needed, and to involve the private sector and Indigenous Peoples.

“Humanity is at a crossroads, we are approaching planetary boundaries, and facing systemic risks said Jamil Ahmad, Director, Intergovernmental Affairs, UNEP New York Office, adding that “the way we manage our relationship with nature will determine our future.” He pointed to NbS as a recognized scalable option, defined in a 2022 UN Environment Assembly resolution, which also recognized nature’s role in risks. Further, he highlighted NbS as a scalable option and an integrative way to address climate change, disasters, and support ecosystem services, livelihoods, and wellbeing. He highlighted the UNEP’s 2021 State of Finance for Nature Report and that the NbS financial gap will be close to USD 4.1 trillion by 2050. “To meet global climate, biodiversity, land targets, NbS investments need to triple,” he said, meaning collaboration between Member States and the financial sector is essential to an enabling framework. He said estimates of USD 48 million in loss and damages in the environment sector from Pakistan’s recent floods are an example of the overemphasis on reactive measures rather than building back better and greener. He emphasized the need for evidence on environmental loss and damage.

Several Member States provided insights on ongoing actions and pledges to scale up environment-related actions. Ivete Maibaze, Minister of Land and Environment, Mozambique, said ecosystem degradation poses serious threats. She described how 11 cyclones have hit Mozambique since 2015, causing loss of human life, damage to infrastructure, and economic impacts. She called for strengthening harmonization of national agendas in the context of DRR, climate change, and biodiversity conservation focusing on “30x30” target. She discussed the importance of alignment between

countries, including the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation countries, which promote sustainable and integrated forestry management. She also highlighted the need for innovative financing models to reduce vulnerability, such as loss and damage financing.

Trevor Bhupsingh, Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Safety, Emergency Management and Programs Branch, Public Safety, Canada, called the continued implementation of the Sendai Framework “a monumental task” and emphasized “nature conscious development” for protecting people and ecosystem services. He discussed that although national governments can play a guiding and convening role, many levers for NbS are at provincial and territorial levels. Providing an example of the importance of Indigenous knowledge, he said First Nation Chiefs predicted the exceptional wildfire season taking place before any science assessment was done, and this input needs more attention. He added that Canada was developing a social vulnerability index to natural hazard threats and in 2021 had convened five expert advisory tables on transformational goals that include health and wellbeing, natural and built infrastructure, and multi-stakeholder perspectives.

Johann Saathoff, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister of the Interior and Community, Germany, said the climate and biodiversity crises are linked in many ways and both threaten society and wellbeing, and that Germany has taken up this link. He described innovative integrated legal frameworks on climate change, such as a framework for adaptation under the Ministry of Environment that has specific measurable targets, including for monitoring; a national action plan on NbS and biodiversity adopted in 2023; and the 2023 national water strategy that has a 30-year vision and 78 concrete measures across sectors. He noted Germany’s strategies on climate change, biodiversity, and water were interlinked and will change how the country’s policies integrate with nature.

Shri Kamal Kishore, Member Secretary, National Disaster Management Authority, India, said scaling ecosystem-based approaches to DRR is a major challenge. He emphasized considering scale in initial design and stating benefits and how they accrue over time and that grey and green infrastructure need to be considered together. He emphasized the need for accurate benefits of green solutions for DRR and then need for communities to be stakeholders. He said India has a Mission Mangroves campaign that includes benefits for shoreline habitats and income, which demonstrates immediate benefits in wellbeing for women.

David Applegate, Director, US Geological Survey, said NbS are a way to address the cascading change of DRR. He described the US National Nature Assessment that takes stock of benefits of nature to the economy, climate change action, health, and national security, and the National Strategy to Develop Statistics for Environmental-Economic Decisions that provides linkages with the current national economic accounting system, and tracks natural assets, for one to inform cost of hazard recovery. He said NbS are a thread through international projects on climate change adaptation supported by the US.

A discussion ensued about barriers, gaps, and opportunities for addressing challenges and increasing resilience. The AFRICAN UNION drew attention to Indigenous knowledge in national policies, and said realistic application remained a challenge. He inquired about ways to ensure this knowledge can be used to trigger national investment. The US Geological Survey said they are working to formalize the use of traditional and ecological and geological knowledge into evidence-based decision making.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY pointed to the Words into Action series of guidelines for a people-centered approach to DRR developed under UNDRR.

David Cooper, Acting Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity, via video message, stressed that natural disasters cause habitat destruction, species loss, and ecosystem degradation, leading to a vicious cycle of extreme events, increasing in frequency and severity. He stressed that the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the Sendai Framework are two crucial, complementary agreements that must pursue synergistic implementation at all levels, following a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.

Emmanuel Marfo, Member of Parliament, Ghana, and Chairperson, Climate Vulnerable Forum Global Parliamentary Group, noted that, in developing countries in particular, the development of DRR national plans and strategies takes place within the executive departments, without involving national parliaments. He added that while at the rhetorical level national plans exist, the necessary resources are often not available.

Gwendolyn Pang, Secretary-General of the Philippine Red Cross, said that, in many places, the main challenge remains finding a balance between sustaining livelihoods and protecting the environment. She outlined projects led by the IFRC on interzonal coastal management and environmental restoration and management.

Swetha Stotra Bhashyam, Global South Focal Point, Global Youth Biodiversity Network, highlighted that biodiversity, functional ecosystems, and Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' knowledge are protecting us, contributing to our long-term survival and wellbeing. She urged inclusion of rights-based approaches in decision making and a fundamental transformational change in values, priorities, and actions, pointing to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the Sendai Framework as good steppingstones to create that transformation path.

Rebecca Benner, Deputy Director of Global Climate, The Nature Conservancy, highlighted the role nature plays in DRR, offering relevant examples. She discussed the limits of nature in "soaking up the excess of human affluence," and called for engaging Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women, and youth for sustainable outcomes offering increased resilience.

Moira Gill, Chair, UN Principles of Sustainable Insurance (UNPSI) Board and Associate Vice President for Environment, Government and Industry Relations, TD Insurance, stressed that the business sector needs certainty to make meaningful contributions, and underscored the role of international agreements. Noting the strong links between nature and the insurance industry, she highlighted UNPSI's work on plastic pollution, heritage sites, and nature-positive insurance.

Shalini Dhyani, Principal Scientist, CSIR-National Environment Engineering Research Institute, India, drew attention to socio-ecological interactions, stressing that NbS require continuous partnerships, and people-centered, multisectoral approaches. She emphasized that nature cannot always provide solutions to all our challenges, underscoring the value of hybrid approaches. She called for integration of diverse knowledge systems, and for incentivizing NbS, working with marginalized communities to build trust and localized solutions through co-design, co-creation, co-management, and co-governing for better DRR outcomes.

In concluding remarks, Ahmad offered common themes and messages, including: the need to engage Indigenous Peoples and local communities more formally and institutionalize traditional

knowledge; enhance multilateral collaboration; empower youth and bring all stakeholders together; and take into account the value of nature for the economy and, by extension, the value of NbS.

Political Declaration of the High-Level Meeting of the Sendai Framework Midterm Review

In the 11-page Political Declaration ([A/77/L.70](#)), Heads of State and Government, Ministers, and High-level Representatives reaffirm their commitment to the full implementation of the Sendai Framework and reiterate its call for the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods, and health. They recognize the need for a broader and more people-centered preventive approach to DRR, reflecting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and that policies and practices need to be multi-hazard and multisectoral, inclusive, and accessible.

While it recognizes that the implementation of the Sendai Framework is delivering positive results, the Declaration expresses deep concern that the pace of implementation is not sufficient nor equal and notes insufficient access to disaster data, risk knowledge, technology, and financing. It further expresses deep concern at the increasing frequency and intensity, and the number and scale of disasters and their devastating impacts, which undermine progress towards sustainable development and the achievement of the SDGs, especially for vulnerable countries, noting that economic losses are rising.

The Declaration recognizes that: disaster risk is increasingly complex and systemic; hazards can trigger each other with cascading and compounding impacts within and across sectors and geographies; and conventional approaches to disaster management are no longer adequate. Highlighting the need to shift from managing disasters and their impacts to reducing and preventing disaster risk, it reaffirms a commitment to addressing DRR and building resilience with renewed urgency.

The Declaration also highlights the synergies between the implementation of the Sendai Framework, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Paris Agreement on climate change, and reaffirms the urgency of implementing the Sendai Framework for a risk-informed approach to sustainable development.

The Declaration contains four priorities:

- understanding disaster risk;
- strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk;
- investing in DRR for resilience; and
- enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction.

On **understanding disaster risk**, the Declaration highlights gaps in the collection of disaster loss and risk data as barriers to the development of inclusive multisectoral DRR policies and emphasizes strengthened efforts to, among others:

- enhance the quality of and access to multi-hazard risk data in all sectors;
- assess core drivers of risk creation and vulnerability;
- foster better understanding and knowledge of disaster risk; and
- strengthen awareness and understanding of new, emerging, and future disaster risks.

The Declaration calls upon states to:

- strengthen the collection and analysis of data on hazards, disaster events, and their impacts, and the monitoring of systemic risk, cascading effects, compounding hazards and multiple risk drivers;

- ensure the provision of adequate, sustainable, and timely means of implementation;
- improve national mechanisms to share disaster risk data and analysis, and ensure they are accessible, interoperable, and available in easily understandable formats;
- enhance the collection and interpretation of data disaggregated by income, sex, age, and disability;
- ensure the use of traditional, Indigenous, and local knowledge and practices; and
- enhance efforts to promote a culture of disaster prevention, resilience, responsible citizenship, and education on disaster risk.

On **strengthening disaster risk governance**, the Declaration reaffirms that each state has the primary responsibility to prevent and reduce disaster risk and reiterates the importance of engaging all of society in DRR planning. It emphasizes that silos within and between national and local institutions limit coordination between DRR, biodiversity conservation, sustainable development and economic policies, and climate change policies. It also stresses the need to enhance coordination, coherence, and integration between disaster and health risk management systems. The Declaration calls upon states to:

- strengthen national multi-hazard risk governance;
- support and enable all local authorities to have DRR strategies;
- ensure that disaster risk governance is supported by legal and regulatory frameworks;
- promote full, equal, meaningful, and inclusive participation in all processes related to DRR and in the design and implementation of DRR policies, plans, and programmes;
- mainstream DRR in the implementation of other relevant policy areas;
- promote DRR policies, strategies, and actions that reduce the risk of displacement in the context of disasters;
- promote NbS and ecosystem-based approaches, among other approaches, for DRR at all levels; and
- engage with global, regional, and subregional organizations to intensify their work in advancing cooperation and transferring knowledge and technologies, on mutually agreed terms, for DRR.

On **investing in DRR for resilience**, the Declaration recognizes that investments in DRR and efforts to de-risk investments remain inadequate and DRR-related official development assistance has barely increased. It stresses the need to improve means of implementation for developing countries and the need for sustainable and predictable investment in DRR in all sectors. The Declaration recognizes the detrimental impact of disasters on the debt sustainability of many vulnerable countries, and expresses deep concern that public and private investments to anticipate, plan for, reduce, and prevent disaster risk remain insufficient and do not match the scale of existing and future risk. It also recognizes the need to implement integrated and inclusive economic measures that prevent and reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability to disasters, and the need for the global community to enhance efforts to scale up DRR financing instruments. The Declaration further calls upon states to:

- identify gaps in public spending on DRR and allocate increased domestic resources;
- develop comprehensive national and local DRR financing strategies;
- encourage financial authorities to integrate DRR into their work and promote relevant investment;
- ensure that infrastructure plans are aligned to DRR strategies;

- engage with the private sector to scale up investment in DRR;
- prioritize and enhance the allocation of and access to sustainable and predictable financing for DRR at all levels;
- enhance financing for early and anticipatory approaches to reduce the impact of disasters;
- incorporate DRR measures into multilateral and bilateral development assistance programmes, and infrastructure financing;
- promote the development of innovative instruments and tools to finance DRR;
- pursue the reform of international financial institutions to further consider integrating DRR into their work; and
- strengthen prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery for health emergencies.

On **enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction**, the Declaration highlights that building back better principles have not been applied systematically and that coverage of and accessibility to multi-hazard early warning systems remains inadequate. It recognizes that more is needed to invest in, develop, maintain, and strengthen people-centered, multi-hazard, and multisectoral forecasting and early warning systems. It welcomes progress on the UN Secretary-General’s call to protect everyone on Earth through universal coverage of early warning systems. The Declaration calls upon states to:

- prepare, review, and exercise national and local disaster response, recovery, and rehabilitation plans;
- ensure the incorporation of disaster risk management into post-disaster recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction processes;
- promote the further development of and investment in effective local, national, and regional multi-hazard early warning mechanisms;
- strengthen good governance and accountability in DRR strategies at all levels;
- strengthen risk monitoring, impact-based forecasting, and early warning communication at all levels;
- strengthen subregional, regional, and global cooperation on transboundary risk and disasters;
- recognize that countries affected by protracted humanitarian crises and emergencies are among those most vulnerable to the impacts of disasters; and
- enhance recovery schemes to provide psychosocial support and mental health services for all people in need.

On **follow-up and review**, the Declaration:

- reiterates the instrumental and cross-cutting role of science, technology, and innovation, and highlights upcoming global and regional platforms for DRR to be held before 2030 to assess and discuss progress on, and give practical guidance to, the implementation of the Sendai Framework;
- notes the establishment of the Group of 20 Working Group on DRR;
- welcomes the progress by the High-level Panel on the Development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index for SIDS;
- welcomes the progress regarding enhancing the capacity and capability of developing countries, in particular the most vulnerable, and recognizes that North-South cooperation, complemented by South-South and triangular cooperation is key to DRR;
- notes ongoing work to develop a gender action plan for the implementation of the Sendai Framework; and

- calls upon relevant entities of the UN system to enhance support for the implementation of the Sendai Framework, including technical support.

Closing Plenary

Mami Mizutori, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for DRR and Head of UNDRR, thanked all participants and stakeholders for their contributions to the Midterm Review, the High-Level meeting, and risk reduction in general, stressing that the adopted Political Declaration “commits us to new actions for risk-informed decision making, investment, and behavior to 2030.” She emphasized that risk-informed sustainable development is at the center of the global political agenda and noted global recognition of cascading impacts of disasters. She stressed the need to move from managing disasters to managing disaster risk, investing in risk management and shifting responsibility and accountability for risk prevention to multiple authorities and away from a centralized agency. She called for allocating increased domestic resources to ensure DRR is mainstreamed in public budgeting, expenditure, investment, and procurement processes, developing incentives for private investment in DRR, and integrating it in the work of financial authorities. She concluded by stressing that transformation for successful disaster reduction and resilience requires commitment at all levels and political will.

UNGA President Csaba Kőrösi underscored that discussions during the meeting were driven by a spirit of solidarity and cooperation, and guided by scientific evidence. He stressed the need to move from rhetoric to transformative action, prioritizing the most vulnerable, and addressing unsustainable consumption and risk-blind investment. He urged understanding the interdependencies between water, energy, food, health, trade, the financial system, and the environment, as well as the dynamic nature of risk. He emphasized the need to move away from reactive, short-term policies towards proactive ones that address vulnerabilities and uncertainties. Quoting Benjamin Franklin, he stressed that by “failing to prepare we prepare to fail.” He called on states to develop permanent risk assessment and management capabilities at the highest national level by 2030, and establish a facility for de-risking the financial system. He said that the Midterm Review “revealed what must be done,” inviting delegates to “prove we have the will to do it,” as part of a new era of humility, inclusivity, and sustainability for humanity.

He gavelled the meeting to a close at 6:08 pm.

A Brief Analysis of the Meeting

“*A defining point in history.*” This is how UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed described the global situation in her opening speech at the UN’s High-Level Meeting on the Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework. Her words are not hyperbole. Held under the auspices of the UN General Assembly in New York, the review took place against an alarming litany of global crises and regional disasters. A high-level meeting on disaster risk reduction (DRR) could therefore not have been more timely or relevant. There is clearly a pressing need for answers to many seemingly intractable problems.

It has been eight years since the adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. With seven years to go, did this Midterm Review deliver what was needed to get the world on track to meet the Sendai Framework’s targets? This analysis will consider the current situation, assess whether the event generated

necessary ideas and momentum, look at who was in attendance and how they might help advance progress, and evaluate prospects for the critical years ahead.

A Perfect Storm

One of the aims of the Midterm Review was to assess the current global situation in the context of DRR. In this regard, the [Report of the Midterm Review](#), published shortly before the meeting, contains both good and bad news. On the positive side of the ledger, there has been progress in reducing global disaster mortality, at least before the COVID-19 pandemic started in 2020. What’s more, the number of countries developing national and local DRR strategies has increased, efforts to cooperate internationally have expanded, and multi-hazard early warning systems have grown in number. There have also been technical improvements in data collection and our understanding of risk. Such advances should be welcomed.

However, these have been more than offset by the bad news. Many participants at the Midterm Review bemoaned the impact of climate change, especially the growing number of extreme or more intense events. Almost every delegate at the meeting could point to a recent drought, storm, cyclone, heatwave or other weather event in their country within the past twelve months. “Today we’re getting floods in one province, fires in another,” grumbled a Canadian delegate.

The devastating COVID-19 pandemic was also on the minds of many in attendance, along with the impact of conflicts in Ukraine, Syria, Sudan and elsewhere. The loss of life and economic damage caused by these events are considerable. Along with rapid biodiversity loss, widespread pollution, growing great power rivalries, health emergencies, and even emerging fears over artificial intelligence, the current state of the world seems uncertain, even grim. One participant called this a “perfect storm” of bad news. UN Development Programme Administrator Achim Steiner labeled it a “polycrisis.”

In the context of the Sendai Framework, the Midterm Review Report noted progress on just two of the seven targets. “Countries are not on track to realize the expected outcome of the Sendai Framework,” it warned. If ever an event was needed to help turn things around with new ideas, policies, and momentum, the Midterm Review was it. But could it deliver?

A Flood of Ideas

When it comes to the question of whether the event generated ideas, the answer must be yes. It was obvious at almost every session that the DRR community has learned a lot since 2015. Every event was well attended, with panelists eager to share lessons learned, success stories, and new ideas. A key theme in almost every discussion was the need to bring a risk management lens to all sectors and to focus on prevention rather than response. “Imagine a world without disasters,” gushed a motivational video at the start of the opening plenary. Delegates seemed unanimous that this vision could only be achieved with a fundamental shift to focus on prevention and a move from managing disasters to managing risk.

The need to build resilience was another topic on which there was consensus, along with breaking down silos. Collaboration across sectors and at different levels of government became a mantra, with local authorities particularly prominent. Indeed, Achim Steiner referred to local government as both the critical “frontline” and a potential DRR “Achilles heel” if they are not properly resourced, engaged, and empowered. Currently, only a fraction of relevant funding gets to such groups.

Early warning systems were frequently discussed, with the Early Warning for All by 2027 initiative, co-led by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the World Meteorological Organization, garnering praise. The gender dimension of DRR also cropped up often, with recognition that disasters have an undue impact on women and girls. In this respect, there was widespread support for a Gender Action Plan to be produced by the end of the year.

Another constructive focus of discussions was the idea of “whole-of-government,” “whole-of-society,” and people-centered approaches. These all recognize that DRR cannot be achieved by central governments operating alone. This stream of ideas was well received by all stakeholder groups.

The Eye of the Tornado

Another positive takeaway from the event was its organization. Convened by the UN General Assembly President, the event was seamless in its execution. While a perfect storm may appear to be gathering globally, the Midterm Review took place in New York under balmy spring skies. UN staff operated behind the scenes with calm efficiency as local personnel worked collaboratively with colleagues from UNDRR, UN-Women, and others. Together, these UN teams can take credit for a meeting that blended formal plenaries with engaging multi-stakeholder panels, leaders’ roundtables, and informal events (referred to as the “Hub”). The format encouraged open dialogue and some fascinating and high-quality discussions. There were few technical hitches or logistical difficulties to derail what many felt was a cordial and constructive atmosphere.

What about political momentum? Again, there was at least one noteworthy success. A political declaration, negotiated in recent months under the able stewardship of Australia and Indonesia, passed through plenary without incident—another positive result. The declaration, which constitutes the meeting’s main formal outcome, captures many of the good policies and practices that have emerged in recent years. These include the need to better understand disaster risk, strengthen governance, build resilience, enhance disaster preparedness, and “build back better” in the recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction stage.

But will any of this catalyze the necessary action? In part, it depends on the people who were in the room.

Feast or Famine?

Who was there? Were they the right people to deliver action? First, the good news: participants offered up a feast of different affiliations and a smorgasbord of skills and experiences. Particularly noteworthy was the high profile of delegates from local authorities, regional organizations, and a range of UN agencies and programmes. There was also a respectable sprinkling of private sector participants, visible expertise on data and new technology, a number of engineers, and a strong presence of World Bank experts. The event may not have attracted “stardust” in the form of famous celebrities or household names. However, some “icing on the cake” was added by the attendance of several presidents and prime ministers, along with dozens of government ministers and other high-level officials. The quality of participants was also acknowledged, with deep expertise apparent across a range of fields.

That said, it was more of a famine when it came to certain relevant sectors. Humanitarian professionals and leaders from the food and health fields were less visible than some might have expected. Some participants also noted the apparent absence of senior figures from the UN climate or biodiversity conventions, although some did make online contributions. Government ministers

were mostly from the disaster or development fields, with business and finance ministries largely absent.

Does this mix of participants add up to a feast or a famine? Time will tell. However, if a key theme of the meeting was to work across silos and encourage collaboration, it seems clear that while many important connections were made, a few were not.

Up in Smoke?

A major concern was finance. The topic came up in almost every session, either front and center or as a slow-burning issue. The finance conversation focused on several specific matters. One was the opportunity cost for governments having to divert money to post-disaster recovery. For some developing countries, one disaster can burn a hole in their entire annual budget. These are often funds that could be used for healthcare, education or other needs. “It feels like our money is just going up in smoke,” lamented a delegate from the Global South.

Another topic concerned private investment and risk. Investors need to feel confident they will make a good return on their outlay, and this is being adversely affected by climate change and other crises. The fears of the insurance industry were well aired and the need for more public-private cooperation was a common refrain.

A third finance-related issue centered on the multilateral development banks. At the 27th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2022, there appeared to be a growing desire among developing countries to challenge and change the international financial architecture around aid. This topic flared up several times during the Sendai Midterm Review as well. The Global South is seeking more control over institutional financial flows in general. But will this issue carry into future multilateral meetings, eventually leading to change?

Another discussion centered around creative ways to catalyze much-needed risk-informed infrastructure spending to build resilience. There were also conversations around the need to increase funding for pre-disaster planning and prevention, in addition to the post-disaster phase.

Finally, there was the matter of official development assistance (ODA). While there were no groundbreaking announcements, several countries from the Global North and a number of the larger emerging economies made clear their intention to focus more funding and support on DRR.

Can We Beat the Heat?

The next few years will be crucial, not just for the Sendai Framework’s 2030 goals, but also for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. As several delegates in New York pointed out, these are all clearly connected. If Sendai’s targets are not achieved, the SDGs will be derailed. Likewise, the links with climate are clear and 2030 will mark a key milestone for the Paris Agreement, since many countries have set ambitious goals for that year.

Can the global community do enough to beat the heat and address this current “polycrisis?” There is much to do, and in many areas. Delegates at the Midterm Review recognized this, with many reflecting on complexity and the need for better coordination and collaboration.

There is also the need for solidarity. Several countries, mostly from the Global South, discussed how they had immediately mobilized to help their “sisters and brothers” in Türkiye and Syria after the horrific earthquakes earlier this year. Such expressions of

compassion and unity in the face of disaster were welcomed as a silver lining in an otherwise dark moment. It is clear that we will stand, or fall, together.

Such solidarity will be more important than ever in the coming years, not only when the worst happens but for the “pre-disaster” work we must do on prevention, planning, and building resilience. In this respect a multilateral response is necessary, and speakers pointed out the UN’s convening power. Who else could have brought together such a diverse set of stakeholders?

As they departed UN Headquarters on Friday evening, delegates were already looking to upcoming events that can address DRR, especially the SDG Summit in September. Will the risk management approach to development stressed in the Midterm Review be mainstreamed into the SDG Summit conversations in a meaningful way? And did the Midterm Review do enough to catalyze new action on implementation locally, nationally, and regionally?

We may not truly know if the Midterm Review got us back on track until 2030, the deadline for the Sendai targets. However, governments, local authorities, the international community and other stakeholders clearly recognized that we all know what to do... if only we can muster the collective will.

Upcoming Meetings

International Conference on Urban Disaster Recovery Planning and DRR: The International Research Conference is a federated organization, aiming to bring together leading academic scientists, researchers, and research scholars to exchange and share their experiences and research results on all aspects of Urban Disaster Recovery Planning and DRR. **dates:** 22-23 May 2023 **location:** Vancouver, Canada **www:** waset.org/urban-disaster-recovery-planning-and-disaster-risk-reduction-conference-in-may-2023-in-vancouver

2023 Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Disaster-related Statistics: The 2023 Forum is organized to advance the production and use of disaster-related statistics for risk-informed development. Producers and users of disaster-related statistics will share knowledge and experiences, resulting in strengthening of data standards. The 2023 Forum is organized by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). **dates:** 5-7 June 2023 **location:** Bangkok, Thailand **www:** unescap.org/events/2023/third-expert-forum-producers-and-users-disaster-related-statistics

UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies: The 58th sessions of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) will prepare for the 28th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 28). **dates:** 5-15 June 2023 **location:** Bonn, Germany **www:** unfccc.int/sb58

UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: The 2023 session of the HLPF under the auspices of Economic and Social Council will take place on the theme “Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels.” It will include in-depth review of SDGs 6 (clean water and sanitation), 7 (affordable and clean energy), 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and 17 (partnership for the Goals). **dates:** 10-19 July 2023 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York, US **www:** hlpf.un.org/2023

International Conference on Disaster Resilience and Risk Reduction in the Built Environment: Organized by the International Research Conference, the meeting provides an interdisciplinary platform for researchers, practitioners, and educators to present and discuss the most recent innovations, trends, and concerns as well as practical challenges encountered, and solutions adopted in the fields of disaster resilience and risk reduction in the built environment. **dates:** 19-20 June 2023 **location:** Toronto, Canada **www:** waset.org/disaster-resilience-and-risk-reduction-in-built-environment-conference-in-june-2023-in-toronto

4th ESCAP Disaster Resilience Week: The eighth session of the Committee on DRR will take place during the ESCAP Disaster Resilience Week. Various expert group meetings and side events will be held during the week and prior to the Committee to enrich its discussions. During the week, a Regional Learning Platform for knowledge exchange and learning on the most pressing resilience issues of the day will be held from 24-28 July. The deliberations will be guided by the Executive Action Plan of Early Warning for All 2023-2027 and the Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan. **dates:** 24-28 July 2023 **location:** Bangkok, Thailand **www:** unescap.org/events/2023/escap-disaster-resilience-week

International Conference on Geological Urban Risks and DRR: The meeting will bring together leading academic scientists, researchers, and research scholars to exchange and share their experiences and research results on geological urban risks and DRR. **dates:** 24-25 August 2023 **location:** Dublin, Ireland **www:** waset.org/geological-urban-risks-and-disaster-risk-reduction-conference-in-august-2023-in-dublin

SDG Summit: This summit is the quadrennial meeting of the HLPF under the auspices of the UN General Assembly. The 2023 Summit will be the second since the adoption of the SDGs in 2015 and will take place at the midpoint of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. **dates:** 19-20 September 2023 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** un.org/en/conferences/SDGSummit2023

UN Climate Change Conference: The 28th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 28) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 18), and the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 5) will continue working on climate change-related issues. **dates:** 30 November – 12 December 2023 **location:** Dubai, United Arab Emirates **www:** unfccc.int/cop28

For additional upcoming events, see: sdg.iisd.org

Glossary

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
GDP	Gross domestic product
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
NbS	Nature-based solutions
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
UNDRR	UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNGA	UN General Assembly