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Call to Action from the Civil Society Stakeholder Group

2022 Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (APMCDRR), Brisbane, Australia

“Resilience will not be achieved by simply implementing projects. Rather, awareness and everyday actions of citizens at a grassroots level in Asia need to be geared towards resilience.” (Asian Disaster Reduction and Response Network – ADRRN – Strategy 2030)

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed chronic development fault lines in Asia and the Pacific, taking a heavy toll on the social and economic well-being of the region’s people. Slow regional progress in implementing the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, The Sendai Declaration and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (Sendai Framework) and other frameworks has done little to reduce wide gaps in social services, digital access and green development, and that has exacerbated the vulnerability to such shocks.¹ The pandemic has shown how the localization benefit the communities in responding to the disaster when it takes time for other stakeholders to respond. Thus, strengthening the capacity and leadership of local actors including communities, civil society organisations, faith-based organisations, and others who are at the forefront should be seen as priority, increased in scale, in continuous manner.

The Asia-Pacific region faces a complex risk landscape, or “risk-scape”. The far-reaching effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are a reminder that policymakers can no longer work in silos to separately consider “economic” and “non-economic” shocks and outcomes. Health emergencies and climate disasters are also economic risks, while financial crises and trade shocks can reverse hard-won gains on the social and environmental fronts. We are facing unprecedented levels of heat, flooding, tropical cyclones, and landslides, amid other emerging risks exacerbated by habitat loss, biodiversity decline, and improper water management and pollution, which calls for a more comprehensive and integrated approach to building resilience in line with the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction for the Asia-Pacific region.

Multiple disasters with extreme intensities in quick succession mean socio-economic and demographic factors are becoming increasingly relevant in the ability to bounce back (for communities and countries). Those on the margins are also the ones most affected by the rising inequalities. The Global Platform 2022 (GPDRR) underscored urgent actions necessary to accelerate efforts to bring the world on track to achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. To achieve the 2030 Agenda, disaster risk reduction must be integrated at the core of development and finance policies, legislation and plans. GNDR’s call for action at GPDRR reemphasized the priorities and commitments

¹ <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/Survey%202021%20Towards%20post-COVID-19%20resilient%20economies.pdf>



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from civil society organisations around the world, including how resilience thinking should start from community-centred, nature and ecosystem-based perspectives and approaches. There is an urgent need for regional collaboration and partnerships to innovate and ensure solutions for large-scale transformative change. In our language from civil society organisations, there needs to be a ‘resilience movement’ rather than relying on a series of project implementations which is only targeting smaller segment of society; thus requiring whole-of-society engagement to reach more people who oftentimes left out of the populist approach to a problem.

It is time to transform our disaster science into people’s science, fostering a movement of resilience in every part of our society, in order to tackle systemic risk that affects every aspect of our various communities.

Therefore, ADRRN commits to prioritising the following key actions and calls on fellow civil society organisations and DRR stakeholders to join and lead the ‘Resilience Movement’.

1. Turn ‘Think Resilience’ to ‘Resilience Movement’

From emergency response to preparedness, anticipatory action to early recovery, the leadership in moving things along must be demonstrated by local communities, their leaders, and local organisations. Embed a “Think Resilience” approach into all investments and decision making, and integrate DRR with the whole-of-government and whole-society. The Sendai Framework also suggests that governments cede space and acknowledge the role of civil society organisations as well as businesses, women, youths, people living with disabilities, which will ensure optimal leverage of resources including relevant traditional knowledge and skill sets, experiences, lessons and best practices, assets and public goods.

Such co-creation of solutions that, using the multiplier effect of networks, will more effectively address population scale challenges. Along with governments, both civil society, academia, and businesses can bring their respective comparative advantages to meet such challenges. In the current disaster response structure, many of above stakeholders at best have a consultative role. A seat at the table for these stakeholders will ensure optimal leverage of resources – assets and public goods - and co-creation of solutions that, using the multiplier effect of networks, will more effectively address population scale challenges. Along with governments, each stakeholder groups can bring their respective comparative advantages to meet such challenges.

2. Anticipate, Act, and Learn

Strive towards making humanitarian tools and services more context specific and scalable, timely, with the use of data, technology, and relevant traditional knowledge, through innovation, from very small local responses to overwhelming mega-disasters. Greater recognition, capacity building, technology transfer, and predictable funding allocation for smaller but recurrent disasters will help reduce the compound loss of resilience and mitigate the impact of more severe events in the future. In order to anticipate, act, and learn, information management system that collects relevant



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information necessary to anticipate, which could be used to act and effective monitoring to learn are critical. We call for greater collaboration of CSOs, local, national, international NGOs, international organisations, and other technical agencies to collaborate to realize this, with necessary resources reaching as locally as possible.

Furthermore, there are always reasons why hazards impact our lives as they do, so learning from each disaster to capture the lessons for the future is essential in communicating disaster science to the people, so that it becomes a people's science that stimulates this 'Resilience Movement'. For example, for people with disabilities to participate in risk mitigation, accessibility and access to support services such as assistive devices and technology and physical assistance is critical to realize such resilience movement. And it is also important to note that no movement is sustainable or effective without the optimal participation and leadership of youth.

3. We are all locals

No matter where we are from, we all represent a community. When we take on international cooperation, we shall cherish the same importance we give to our own respective communities and to the communities we work with. We will collaborate with care and thoughtfulness, engage various actors with genuine concerns and attitudes, in order to tackle ever increasing systemic risks that we face as a region. We will be accountable for our actions and our interactions with the communities, with the utmost respect for the resilience capacity each community already possesses.

For all colleagues who gather in Brisbane for the occasion of APMCDRR 2022, we would like to call you to act as leaders in the 'Resilience Movement' over the coming years - starting now. As the famous quote says, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader." (John Quincy Adams)

END