

*Check against delivery*

**Concluding Meeting of the 23rd OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum**

**14-16 September 2015, Prague, Czech Republic**

Section VI: Governing Waters for Effective Disaster Risk Reduction,

September 15, 2015

Speech by Dr. Ursula Schaefer-Preuss, Chair of Global Water Partnership

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am grateful for the opportunity to address this meeting. Before sharing a few thoughts on the topic of my contribution on how to govern waters for effective disaster risk reduction, including, what I find very important, gender related aspects, let me thank the organizers for their kind invitation.

Let me start with some introductory notes, followed by some messages coming from the 2<sup>nd</sup> preparatory meeting of the OSCE Forum in Belgrade in May 2015, the main messages from the Sendai DDR Framework and how to implement the Sendai Framework for DDR, and last but not least reflect on the key points of DDR in the context of the post-2015 SDG agenda.

**I. Introductory Notes**

- a. We are all aware of the fact that water related disasters are the most numerous of all disasters occurring worldwide. In the World Economic Forum's 2015 Risks Report water was ranked as the global risk with the greatest potential impact on economies and societies over the next ten years. Water-related disasters are responsible for the largest losses among disaster types. An important driver of increasing losses from water-related hazards has been population growth, particularly in urban settings.

- b. Water insecurity costs the global economy some US\$ 500 billion annually, according to Global Water Partnership (GWP). That figure does not take into account environmental impacts so the total drag on the world economy could be 1% or more of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP). GWP released these figures based on the report *Securing Water, Sustaining Growth*, written by an international expert task force convened by GWP and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The report looks at water's destructive force as well as its contribution to human health and prosperity.
- c. Flood damage is estimated at US\$120 billion per year from urban property damage alone, while major droughts were found to reduce per capita GDP growth by half a percentage point. In particularly vulnerable economies, a 50% reduction in drought effects could lead to a 20% increase in per capita GDP over a period of 30 years. Investing in water security would mitigate many of these losses and promote long-term sustainable growth.
- d. The Global Water Partnership, over the years, has assiduously contributed to elevate water as a global communal concern. We are gratified by the work that OSCE is undertaking with its participating States in supporting co-operation and helping them effectively manage their water resources. The growing international consensus on the need to work together across boundaries to address water challenges, among which water related disasters, is the genesis of collective action and provides, in my view, compelling evidence of the emergence of global and regional cooperation to solve the many water challenges that humanity is facing.
- e. We must encourage partnerships. Effective water governance means the contributions of all the stakeholders. There is no doubt that no single set of actors holds the key to addressing the challenge of effective management of water resources. Water security transcends spheres of influence and requires stakeholders to work together. Governments, both national and local obviously have a key role. But the private sector and the NGOs also play a major role. Working together is not optional: it is essential if we are to achieve our vision of a water secure world. We can and must achieve that vision! This requires fundamental changes in

values, beliefs, perceptions and political positions among all stakeholders.

**II. Let me briefly touch upon the main messages from the 2<sup>nd</sup> preparatory meeting of the OSCE Forum in Belgrade in May.**

- a. OSCE is well placed to increase trust by linking climate change and DDR. It plays a role in overcoming difficulties in regional and transboundary co-operation and increase of disaster risk reduction.
- b. There is a need to further improve existing mechanisms of international co-operation for disaster risk management.
- c. Stronger focus on disaster prevention and preparedness is needed. The OSCE should continue supporting the participating states in developing legal frameworks for cross-border co-operation and providing a platform for experience sharing.

**III. Main Messages from the Sendai DDR Framework and how to implement it**

- a. The Sendai Framework is built on elements which ensure continuity with the work under the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 and introduces a number of innovations including as most significant shifts a strong emphasis on disaster risk management as opposed to disaster management,... and that disaster risk reduction has been broadened significantly to focus on both, natural and man-made hazards and risks. Health resilience is strongly promoted throughout.
- b. The Sendai Framework also articulates among others the need for improved understanding of disaster risk in all its dimensions of exposure, including the strengthening of disaster risk governance and respective national platforms. There is a clear recognition of the Global Platform for DDR as mechanisms for coherence across agendas, monitoring and periodic reviews in support of UN Governance bodies.

- c. What is clearly missing in the new Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 is a strong focus on the dimension of water being so high on the global risk agenda. One can only hope that the dimension of water, being fully reflected as a dedicated water goal with all its dimensions as goal no 6 among the 17 SDGs, will find more attention in the 2<sup>nd</sup> UN Special Thematic Session on Water and Disasters in New York , November 18, 2015.
- d. There are many interesting and innovative aspects contained in the new Sendai Framework for DRR. Governance arrangements that bridge and integrate holistically rather than isolate risk, have to guide us. It is evident that partnerships can help us transform risks into development opportunities.
- e. Disaster risk reduction from water-related events must be based on a Participatory approach that is inclusive of all-of-society. In doing so, women, children, and the poor must be engaged as crucial stakeholders in this disaster risk management work as they are most vulnerable and disproportionately harmed during disasters. In particular, women's participation in water and disaster risk management empowers women, but also contributes to more effective and appropriate actions in these areas.
- f. An integrated approach to managing water provides a framework for Incorporating risk-based assessments into development decision....As mentioned earlier partnerships are an essential ingredient that helps societies to advance in the application of integrated approaches to manage water. Two examples of such partnerships are the Associated Programme on Flood Management (APFM) and the Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP) created by WMO and GWP. Each programme has over 20 active, global partners that works with a large network of national and local stakeholders, including women (one example is the IDMP in Central and Eastern Europe).
- g. These partnership programmes are already working on transforming the lying drivers to reduce the impacts when floods or droughts occur. We should use and strengthen such existing partnerships when moving forward with the post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework. We invite you all to become part of these efforts!

#### **IV. Key points on DRR in the context of the SDGs**

The final draft of the outcome document for the UN Summit starting in a week's time, which will adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda is a ground breaking document, reflecting the unanimous agreement of our global society and by that of all UN member states.

Water is high on the agenda of this document- also reflecting that “Water is Life”, as has been stated by UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon. It would have been ideal to have DRR related elements being more appropriately and jointly included under the water umbrella, but this initiative unfortunately did not fly. Key elements of DRR are now spread over various of the SDGs and its targets. But it can be stated that DRR advances progress on sustainable development and climate change. We have to continue with our endeavors in governing water for effective disaster risk reduction, including all segments of our societies, from governments, regions, communities to the manifold local stakeholders, including indigenous people, women, youth, children, the ageing and other parts of society ,being part of the group of the most vulnerable.

There are no ready-made solutions but there are solutions as can be seen from the partnership based initiatives like the APFM and the IDMP.

Let me take this opportunity and thank the manifold membership of the network of the Global Water Partnership on the ground for all their efforts to contribute to a water secure world!

Thank you very much for your attention.