Wetlands International
P.O. Box 471
6700 AL Wageningen
The Netherlands
+31 (0) 318 660 910
post@wetlands.org
www.wetlands.org

Inputs by Wetlands International to the pre-zero-draft of the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction.

Calling for integrated water and wetland management to reduce disaster risk

Wetlands International welcomes the co-chairs' pre-zero draft, dated 8 August. As an organisation with experience in wetland conservation, restoration and sustainable use for the benefit of communities worldwide, we put forward a set of recommendations for inclusion in the post-2015 Framework, summarised in this briefing.

Background:

Water-related hazards account for 90% of all hazards, and their frequency and intensity is generally rising. More and more people will experience water scarcity and suffer the impacts of major floods, droughts, storms and water-related diseases. The way in which we use and manage water resources is central to sustainable risk management. Located at the interface of land and water, wetlands are crucial in regulating the water cycle, for instance by reducing peak flood flow, storing excessive precipitation or recharging groundwater, supplying freshwater for irrigation of both domestic and commercial crops, providing important sources of protein such as fish, and serving as a buffer against storms and saltwater intrusion. Ecosystem based approaches offer the flexibility to grow and adapt to changing environments, which makes maintaining and regenerating natural ecosystems often the most (cost-) effective way of reducing risk and sustaining livelihoods. It is important that the role of ecosystems, and in particular wetlands and water, are adequately addressed in the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction.

Our recommendations to Member States

Preamble:

- The preamble should acknowledge environmental degradation (not only land degradation) as well as unsustainable management of natural resources (in particular water resources) as drivers of disaster risk. It should also acknowledge ecosystem-based approaches as vital means for reducing disaster risk by saving lives and livelihoods.

Guiding principles:

- The guiding principles should place an enhanced emphasis on the conservation and restoration of ecosystems as well as the sustainable management of natural resources, as requisites for effective disaster risk management.
- Risk should be assessed at the landscape scale (e.g. within a river basin or along a coastline) to design effective disaster risk management interventions and to justify how interventions related to land, water and natural resource use may affect the vulnerability or exposure of communities elsewhere.
- Ecosystem considerations should be mainstreamed in national disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation strategies, in local, regional and national water management and land-use plan, sectoral plans and national development strategies.

Priorities for Action:

- *General comment:* The structure of the document is inconsistent with the 3 strategic goals outlined in point 11. We therefore propose the addition of a section on "Prevention" under I. National and local context as well as under II. Global and regional context, for which we make some suggestions for actions to prioritise ecosystem based approaches.

I. Local and regional context:

- *Understanding disaster risk:* Countries should assess risk at the landscape scale, as a requisite to understand risk, and include landscape considerations in risk assessment protocols.
- *Strengthening Governance:* The draft text (point 15h) emphasizes the integration of disaster risk management in other policies, but does not link this to natural resource management plans. Conversely, it does not emphasise the integration of landscape and watershed level risks and ecosystem-based approaches in disaster risk reduction and other (related), strategies, policies and plans.
- *Investing in Social, Economic and Environmental Resilience*: This is a very helpful section to encourage countries to invest in ecosystem-based approaches. The text could be further strengthened by emphasising the importance of environmental impact assessments; giving special attention to water-use (in addition to land-use); and specifically recognizing wetlands and all areas prone to droughts and flooding (not only mountain and coastal floodplains). We furthermore believe that countries would benefit from developing guidance for the implementation of green infrastructure and ecosystem-based approaches to disaster risk management.

II. Global and regional context:

- *Understanding disaster risk:* Collaboration should also be ensured for land and water use management and biodiversity and through multi-lateral environmental agreements. Assessing risk at the transboundary landscape scale is absolutely crucial with regard to shared natural resources (in particular water).

III. Role of stakeholders:

- River basin authorities, coastal managers and other authorities responsible for natural resource management also play an essential role in disaster risk management.

International partnership in the implementation and follow-up process:
Disaster risk reduction measures should be appropriately mainstreamed into multilateral and bilateral development assistance programmes including those related to poverty reduction, natural resource management, urban development and adaptation to climate change.

Contact: Susanna.tol@wetlands.org / vera.coelho@wetlands.org / Tel: +31 318 866 093 210.

Pre-zero draft text amendments:

Whilst amendments are not specifically called for presently, we offer the following (Additions are **bold and underlined**, deletions are ~~stricken out.~~):

A. Preamble

4. Trends, such as the increasing interconnectedness and interdependence of globalization, a world heavily-reliant on technology, patterns of consumptions and production, a changing climate, ~~land~~ **environmental** degradation and desertification, **and unsustainable management and use of land, water and other natural resources,** all contribute to modify the nature and characteristics of, and amplify disaster risk. Such trends require that the actions and programs initiated under the HFA continue with perseverance and determination. The momentum generated by the HFA needs to be reinforced further by the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction with a much stronger focus on anticipating long-term risk scenarios and concrete measures to prevent the creation of new risk, reduce the existing risk and strengthen economic and social resilience of countries and people, by addressing both people and assets' exposure and vulnerability.

5. The consultations on the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction have provided clear guidance on the following:

Proposed additional paragraph:

- **Environmental degradation is a major driver of increased risk. Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), ecosystem-based approaches to disaster risk management (including the conservation and restoration of ecosystems and the sustainable management and use of land, water and other natural resources) are vital approaches to reduce disaster risk and adapt to climate change, while strengthening the resilience of countries and people.**

C. Guiding principles

12. The principles contained in the Yokohama Strategy and the HFA general considerations retain their full relevance and are complemented as follows to guide implementation.

b) Managing the risk of disasters should also be aimed at protecting persons, their livelihoods and property, **and environmental assets** while respecting their human rights.

Proposed additional paragraph:

The conservation and restoration of ecosystems and the sustainable management and use of land, water and other natural resources are requisites for effective disaster risk management. Sectoral development policies, planning and programming should include the assessment of risk at the landscape and watershed level, as well as ecosystem based approaches to reduce disaster risk.

D. Priorities for action

13. In pursuing the three strategic goals, and drawing from the knowledge and experience matured in the implementation of the HFA and the previous instruments, there is a need for focused, specific, yet mutually supportive actions in the local, national, regional and global contexts, in key priority areas, namely understanding disaster risk; strengthening governance to manage disaster risk; preparedness for response, recovery and reconstruction; and investing in social, economic, and environmental resilience.

I. National and local context

Understanding disaster risk

(under point 14)

a) Systematically survey, record and publicly account for all disaster loss and economic, **environmental** and social impact, taking into account gender-specific and sex/age/disability- disaggregated data.

b) Periodically assess disaster risks, namely **the exposure and vulnerability of** ~~persons and~~ **social,** economic and **environmental** ~~and fiscal~~ assets[2] ~~exposure and vulnerability~~ **of communities and countries**, as well as hazards' characteristics.

Proposed additional paragraph:

Enhance the understanding of risk driven by environmental degradation and build the capacity of government officers (at regional, national and sub-national level) and stakeholders to assess disaster risk at the relevant spatial scale, such as within a river basin, along coastlines and where relevant on transboundary level, *inter alia* by including landscape level considerations in risk assessment protocols.

h) Promote and improve dialogue and cooperation among scientific communities, including social, economic **and environmental** sciences, and practitioners working on disaster risk management.

Keep:

i) Strengthen the technical and scientific capacity to develop and apply methodologies, studies and models to assess vulnerabilities to and the impact of geological, weather, water and climate-related hazards, including the improvement of regional monitoring capacities and assessments.

Strengthening Governance to Manage Disaster Risk

(under point 15):

Keep:

g) Promote the coherence of, and further develop as appropriate, national and local frameworks of laws, regulations and public policies that, through defining roles and responsibilities:
   - Guide the public sector in addressing disaster risk in publically owned, managed or regulated services and infrastructure, and in the environment;

h) Promote the integration of disaster risk management into development policies and planning at all levels of government, including in poverty reduction strategies **and natural resource management plans (including land-and water use plans),** and sectors and multi sector policies and plans.

Proposed additional paragraph:

National disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation strategies, as well as local, regional and national sectoral, water management and land-use plans and national development strategies should include the assessment of risk at the landscape and watershed level, as well as ecosystem-based approaches to reduce disaster risk.

Proposed new section:

Prevention of disaster risk creation

New paragraph. Increased exposure of people and assets is generating new risk and a steady increase in disaster losses. Investing in prevention and addressing underlying risk factors is more cost-effective than response and recovery, and contributes to saving lives and protecting assets. The adoption of risk informed growth and development measures is essential to reduce hazards, exposure and vulnerability. In particular, the following should be prioritised:

a) Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), ecosystem-based approaches to disaster risk management (including the conservation and restoration of ecosystems and the sustainable management and use of land, water and other natural resources)

are effective disaster prevention strategies, and contribute to the overall resilience of communities. Such approaches tend to be cost-effective, flexible and adaptable over time.

b) Sectoral development policies, planning and programming should include the assessment of risk at the landscape and watershed level, taking into account ecosystem functions and services to reduce disaster risk.

Preparedness for Response, Recovery and Reconstruction – "Build Back Better"

16. There is a call to further strengthen early warning and preparedness systems, motivated by the increase in disaster events as well as evidence that such systems contribute to saving lives and increasing efficiency of preparedness and response. With the increase in magnitude of disaster impacts, not least in highly urbanized settings, and of disasters affecting large numbers of people and high-value national and local infrastructures and economic assets, the cost and complexity of **post-disaster recovery and** reconstruction is rising. Actions should include:

Investing in Social, Economic and Environmental Resilience

Keep:

17. Social, economic and environmental investments are essential to strengthen the resilience of persons, communities, countries and their assets. A continued focus on key development areas, such as health, education, food security, water, ecosystem management, housing, cultural heritage, public awareness, innovative financial and risk transfer mechanisms, especially for local governments, households, and the poor and vulnerable is required. In particular, the following may be prioritized:

h) Promote the integration of disaster risk management measures in **environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments, as well as** in economic valuations, cost-benefit analyses, competitiveness strategies and investment decisions, including in debt ratings, risk analysis and growth forecasts, as well as the determination of incentives, investment scale and timeliness of disbursement, and the spreading of costs over time.

i) Land- **and water** use policy development and implementation, including urban planning, informal and non-permanent housing, should be given special attention due to their direct impact on risk exposure.

j) Promote the incorporation of disaster risk assessment into rural **and urban** development planning and management, in particular with regard to mountain**s,** ~~and~~ coastal flood plain

areas**, wetlands and all other areas prone to droughts and flooding**, including through the identification of land zones that are available and safe for human settlement.

Keep:

k) Strengthen the sustainable use and management of ecosystems.

l) Implement integrated environmental and natural resource management approaches that incorporate disaster risk reduction**, including ecosystem conservation and restoration and Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM).**

m) Encourage the revision of existing or the development of new building codes, standards, rehabilitation and reconstruction practices at the national or local levels**, including guidance for the implementation of green infrastructure or ecosystem-based approaches**, as appropriate, with the aim of making them more applicable in the local context, particularly in informal and marginal human settlements, and reinforce the capacity to implement, monitor and enforce such codes, through a consensus-based approach, with a view to fostering disaster-resistant structures.

II. Global and regional context

(under point 18):

Understanding Disaster Risk

a) The Scientific and Technical Committee, established by the General Assembly in its resolution 44/236 of 22 December 1989, should be revitalized as an international science advisory mechanism, built on networks of national and regional institutions, in order to strengthen the evidence base in support of the implementation and monitoring of this framework; promote scientific research into risk patterns and trends and the causes and effects of disaster risk in society; **promote scientific research into disaster risk reduction practices and solutions;** to promote and support the availability and application of science to decision-making; and to use post-disaster reviews as opportunities to learn and enhance public policy.

Proposed new paragraph:

Promote the further capacity building of government officers and stakeholders to assess disaster risk at transboundary landscape scales, such as within a river basin, and along coastlines to enable policy and planning for the implementation of ecosystem-based approaches to disaster risk management (including the conservation and restoration of ecosystems and the sustainable management and use of land, water and other natural resources) to build resilience and help prevent new disasters across the entire landscape.

Strengthening governance to manage disaster risk

(under point 19):

b) Collaboration should be ensured across mechanisms and institutions for the implementation of instruments relevant to disaster risk, such as for climate change, adaptation, sustainable development, **integrated land and water management, biodiversity** and others **multi-lateral environmental agreements** as appropriate.

d) Voluntary and self-initiated peer reviews among countries and cities should be given due consideration, as they may represent a very useful mechanism to support national **and (sub)-regional** efforts, reviews of progress, mutual learning, exchange of best practices and identification of specific areas for future technical cooperation, exchange of information, technology transfer and financial support, as relevant.

Proposed new section:

Prevention of disaster risk creation

New paragraph. Globalisation and the increased interconnectedness of countries, businesses and communities contributes to increased risk but also to new opportunities. There is a role for governments, international organisations and global businesses to prevent the creation of new risk. In particular, the following should be prioritised:

a) Prioritise the prevention of ecosystem degradation through, *inter alia*, strengthened implementation of international commitments, removal of environmentally harmful subsidies and enhanced engagement of the private sector, *inter alia* through the adoption and implementation of sustainability policies.

b) Promote cooperation at transboundary landscape scales, such as within a river basin and along coastlines, to enable policy and planning for the implementation of ecosystem-based approaches to disaster risk management (including the conservation and restoration of ecosystems and the sustainable management and use of land, water and other natural resources) to build resilience and help prevent new disasters across the entire landscape.

Preparedness for response, recovery and reconstruction

20. The continued strengthening of cooperation at regional and global level on preparedness for response, recovery and reconstruction is critical and may require the following additional measures:

Keep:

21 b) Disaster risk reduction measures should be mainstreamed appropriately into multilateral and bilateral development assistance programmes including those related to poverty reduction, natural resource management, urban development and adaptation to climate change.

III. Role of Stakeholders

23. [new indent]

- **River basin authorities, coastal managers and other authorities responsible for natural resource management are encouraged to develop and implement laws, policies and plans to integrate ecosystem-based approaches, including green infrastructure, in disaster risk management.**

E. International partnership in the implementation and follow-up process

26

b) International cooperation efforts should continue giving priority to strengthening countries' capacity and modalities to manage transboundary disaster risk, including potential disaster-related displacement, through ~~further~~ **joint implementation of prevention measures, including the management of shared natural resources and ecosystems, and** the development of early- warning systems and sharing of knowledge, and the availability of climate services and other relevant earth observation systems.

d) Adequate voluntary financial contributions should be provided to the United Nations Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction, in the effort to ensure adequate support for the follow-up activities to this framework. The current usage and feasibility for the expansion of this fund, should be reviewed, inter alia, to assist disaster-prone developing countries to set up **and implement national strategies** for disaster risk reduction.

Proposed additional paragraph:

Mainstream disaster risk reduction measures appropriately into multilateral and bilateral development assistance programmes including those related to poverty reduction, natural resource management, urban development and adaptation to climate change.