



New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Te Māngai o Aotearoa

SEVENTH SESSION OF THE OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

**New Zealand intervention in segment on Climate change
and Disaster risk reduction**

**Juliet Hay
Counsellor**

10 January 2014

Check against delivery



**NEW ZEALAND
UNITED NATIONS
SECURITY COUNCIL
2015-16**

Listening to this week's discussions has reinforced for us the interrelationships between the different topics this Group is considering. Most of this week's topics could be regarded as "crosscutting" as we were reminded time and again of discussions at earlier meetings. For example, the discussion on urbanisation brought up such issues as population growth and water use. Sustainable transport and sustainable consumption and production (SCP) recalled discussions on health, food security, and energy, and some mentioned possible responses such as reforms to agricultural, fisheries, and fossil fuel subsidies which New Zealand also supports.

We will soon need to confront the issue of how to deal with these interlinkages in the sustainable development goals (SDGs). This week we have heard calls for standalone goals on particular issues, including sustainable urbanisation. While good cases can be made for goals on many different issues we have a challenging time ahead if the goals are to be "limited in number". One criteria in determining whether an issue warrants a standalone goal could be whether its achievement would significantly contribute to global sustainable development by 2030. In deciding this, the nature of the targets required is relevant. We are therefore attracted by Colombia's "integrating approach", which involves identifying targets which may contribute across several priority areas. For example, reduction of food waste mentioned as a priority action in the food security discussion last year is also relevant to SCP, to poverty eradication, land degradation, water use and also to various issues to be considered in February. In our view the integrating approach deserves further consideration.

The issues relating to climate change and disaster risk reduction (DRR) are clearly set out in the Technical Support Team's useful brief. Both present threats to sustainable development and poverty eradication. Disasters threaten lives and livelihoods and often wipe out years of development in a few minutes. The impact can be severe whether a country is developing or developed. Disasters do not have to make the international headlines to have an adverse impact – a "small" disaster in global terms can nonetheless be "huge" for a small country. This is particularly the case for some of our small island neighbours in the Pacific. In addition, recurring "smaller" events often have a cumulative effect over time that damages livelihoods, strips assets, and drives people into poverty.

New Zealand is affected by a range of natural hazards that include earthquakes and volcanic activity as well as weather-related events. We are still recovering from a series of major earthquakes which caused billions of dollars of damage to Christchurch, our second largest city. The rebuilding process is now under way but to illustrate that the challenges do not stop with one hazard, a report was released this week that warns that large parts of Christchurch's coastal suburbs could be submerged by rising sea levels within the next 100 years calling into question further development in those suburbs. The report urges consultation about what level of risk is "tolerable".

The Millennium Development Goals did not mention DRR but since then there has been a significant shift in understanding and greater recognition of DRR as a development issue. In our view DRR should be recognised in the SDGs because disasters affect all countries, both developing and developed, and because reducing disaster risk is at the very core of making development sustainable.

Over the next year or so we will see work intensify on the successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action and on climate change, hopefully both with successful outcomes. As the SDG process does not replace those processes, the question is how should DRR be addressed in this context in a way that is complementary to those other processes. There are suggestions of a standalone SDG on DRR or a broad goal on resilience. At this stage

we suggest treating DRR as a cross-cutting issue, which would involve including targets that support DRR in relevant goals.

Three elements make up disaster risk: the hazard itself; vulnerability; and exposure. What needs to be reflected is the central importance of **being prepared and of resilience** (“bounce back better”). This involves not only reducing current levels of risk (for example, relocation from vulnerable regions or retrofitting) but also preventing or minimising the build-up of new and potential risks. .

We have heard examples of the sort of actions required in this and previous meetings and mention a few:

- **Hazard mapping** (Data collection and analysis is needed down to local levels in order to customise policies and programmes, and should be supported by good science.)
- In the **urbanisation** discussion the importance of “good” planning was stressed. To be “good” it would need to incorporate DRR to address existing risks and build resilience. The points made in that discussion can probably be expressed more generally as they are not just relevant to cities. There is a general need to **incentivise risk sensitive development** in order to arrest and reduce disaster exposure. If development does not take into account natural hazards and vulnerabilities, risk will continue to accelerate.
- This is in turn linked to **governance** issues as development needs to be underpinned by a legal framework that includes compliance and enforcement.
- Drawing on the Christchurch experience, one key element of community resilience was **keeping people in jobs**. (As New Zealand’s economy is dominated by small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the earthquakes served as a wake-up call that support is often needed to keep SMEs going in the event of a disaster.) Goals on **decent work** or **economic development** discussed in June and November respectively should factor in building livelihoods in ways that reduce exposure to risk.
- Also relevant is ensuring that **health** and **education** systems are resilient. A priority after disasters is getting children back to school but this is dependent on both infrastructure and systems.

To build resilience to disasters, a **multi-stakeholder, multi-sector approach** is needed. Risk reduction involves everyone and every sector: governments at national and local levels, communities, and, of course, the private sector. It is responsible for a lot of investment but it is important that this is resilient investment. Public-private partnerships can play a catalytic role in this context. We would see treating DRR as a cross-cutting issue in the SDGs as consistent with the approach being taken in many countries to mainstream DRR into national planning and budgetary processes.