



General Assembly

Distr.: General
2 April 2020

Original: English

Seventy-fifth session

Items 18 (c) and 147 of the preliminary list*

Sustainable development: disaster risk reduction

Joint Inspection Unit

Review of the integration of disaster risk reduction in the work of the United Nations system in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly his comments and those of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled “Review of the integration of disaster risk reduction in the work of the United Nations system in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (see [JIU/REP/2019/3](#)).

* [A/75/50](#).



I. Introduction

1. In its report entitled “Review of the integration of disaster risk reduction in the work of the United Nations system in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (see [A/75/76](#)), the Joint Inspection Unit analyses the extent to which organizations have integrated the issue of disaster risk reduction in their corporate priorities, with regard to either normative or operational activities to implement their mandates. The report presents the United Nations system organizations’ self-reported information on their level of engagement to implement their commitments made through their endorsement of the United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience: Towards a Risk-informed and Integrated Approach to Sustainable Development.

II. General comments

2. Organizations welcome the timeliness and relevance of the report. They welcome the findings of the report, as it identifies both ongoing efforts to reduce disaster risk and prevent the creation of new risk across the United Nations system, while also identifying opportunities to strengthen these efforts.

3. Organizations support working together as a system to address the challenges of disaster risk as growing numbers of people are increasingly exposed to complex disaster risks, fuelled by such factors as climate change, environmental degradation, migration and rapid unplanned urbanization.

4. Organizations note the report offers a comprehensive picture of the current status of disaster risk reduction mainstreaming in the work of the United Nations entities within the context of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience: Towards a Risk-informed and Integrated Approach to Sustainable Development, as endorsed by the United Nations Chiefs Executives Board in 2016.

5. The recognition that greater predictability and availability of resources would strengthen the coordination efforts on disaster risk reduction is particularly welcome.

6. Organizations welcome the Joint Inspection Unit’s call for further improving the quantity and quality of data with necessary disaggregation by sex, age and disabilities to enable, for example, more gender-responsive actions to be taken in the field of disaster risk reduction.

7. Organizations propose to consider main findings of the 2019 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction and the 2019 report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. Both reports, issued after the completion of the Joint Inspection Unit review, advocate for a systemic approach to risk reduction and management which consider climate scenarios and the risks associated with natural, biological and technological hazards. The 2019 Global Assessment Report supports the conclusions of the Joint Inspection Unit report regarding the need for increased coordination and investment in disaster risk reduction.

8. Organizations report that the Senior Leadership Group on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience also concurred with the Inspector’s findings in the course of its deliberations its fourth meeting, held in July 2019.

9. Underscoring that disaster risk reduction and its coherence with the 2030 Agenda will only continue to grow with the increasing frequency and intensity of disasters, including the effects of climate change, organizations would welcome

periodical reviews to assess progress on recommendations, especially given that the Sendai Framework's pivotal target for "the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies" is due by 2020, along with other key Sustainable Development Goal targets resting on concepts of resilience.

10. Some organizations note that while assessing disaster risk reduction, the review could have given greater prominence to cross-sectoral and cross-thematic linkages with other strands of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Furthermore, others note the report would have benefited from a deeper analysis of the linkages between disaster risk reduction with other types of risks and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. These linkages have been brought to the attention of Member States by the United Nations system in various special meetings of the Economic and Social Council in the aftermath of the devastating hurricanes in the Caribbean in 2017 and Cyclone Idai in Mozambique and other southern African countries in 2019.¹

11. Finally, organizations recognize that since the issuance of the Joint Inspection Unit review, a series of substantial activities to strengthen disaster risk reduction at the country and regional levels have been undertaken. For example in the case of the World Health Organization, it leads to national action planning for health security; increased operational readiness in many countries; tools and guidance to strengthen Sendai Framework implementation and reporting; mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction in technical programmes such as mental health and psychosocial support; and the publication of the health emergency and disaster risk management framework, which integrates disaster risk reduction with humanitarian action, health system strengthening and epidemic preparedness, and aims to increase coherence across the Sustainable Development Goals, Sendai Framework, Paris agreement, International Health Regulations (2005) and relevant regional and global frameworks.

12. The organizations partially support the proposed recommendations.

III. Comments on specific recommendations

Recommendation 1

The governing bodies of the organizations of the United Nations system should request the secretariats of their organizations to present a map of interlinkages between the core mandate of their organizations and disaster risk reduction and report on the progress made on disaster risk reduction accordingly, using the specific guidance provided by the "Results Framework of the United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience – guidance for monitoring and reporting on the progress of the implementation of the United Nations Plan for Action on disaster risk reduction".

13. Organizations note that this recommendation is addressed to the legislative and governing bodies. However, some organizations share the view that mapping the interlinkages between the core mandates of the United Nations organizations and disaster risk reduction is conducive to the strengthening of system-wide coherence in support of the Sendai Framework and other agreements, through a risk-informed and integrated approach for all interventions across and within sectors and Sustainable

¹ <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/president/2017/statement-ecosoc-presidential-disasters-25-oct-2017.pdf>; <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/president/2019/statement-ecosoc-presidential-follow-up-meeting-13-nov-2018.pdf>; and <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/2019doc/presidential-statement-on-cyclone-idai-mozambique.pdf>.

Development Goals. This should not be done as a stand-alone process, but either through existing corporate reporting tools or as part of the 2030 Agenda reporting process on progress made to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in order to gain time and cost efficiencies and reduce duplication of efforts.

14. Operational entities note that the methodology supporting the proposed recommendation could be simplified and go beyond the United Nations Plan of Action for Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience to look more broadly at the impacts of advancing disaster risk reduction and resilience at the country level.

15. In this context, organizations recall the outcomes of the fourth meeting of the United Nations Senior Leadership Group on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience, held in July 2019, which highlighted the need to incorporate simplified indicators of the United Nations Plan of Action results framework into each entity's monitoring and reporting frameworks to ensure data availability and quality. They note this would enable substantive reporting on the progress made in implementing disaster risk reduction and improve the coverage and quality of responses, especially at the country level.

Recommendation 2

The Secretary-General, in leading the reform of the United Nations development system, together with the executive heads of the organizations, should ensure that the new generation of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks systematically include disaster risk reduction as part of the common strategic plans of the country teams, to enable risk-informed development and planning, with allocated resources for its implementation, and a common reporting system to measure progress against the priorities of the Sendai Framework and the United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience, with detailed reporting on operational activities to the governing bodies.

16. Organizations partially support this recommendation.

17. The United Nations common guidance on resilience, an inter-agency process led by the United Nations Development Programme, was included as reference in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework guidance. It helps addressing multiple risks in a comprehensive manner, thereby complementing recommendation 1. Such integration work is expected to be based on country-context evidence and analysis and is to be informed by priorities emerging from the common country assessment.

18. Others observe that the inclusion of disaster risk reduction as part of the common country assessments and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks would also facilitate stronger linkages between the work being done at the country level with the normative work being done at the global level. This is especially important for the least developed countries, land-locked developing countries and small island developing States. However, efforts must be made to assign the requisite resources for risk-informed development and planning.

19. Organizations do not support "detailed reporting on operational activities to the governing bodies", but rather favour strategic reporting around individual organizations' strategic plans indicators associated with disaster risk reduction and risk-informed development, in order to avoid additional cumbersome reporting.

Recommendation 3

The executive heads of the organizations working in the field, in contributing to the ongoing reform of the reinvigorated resident coordinator system, should

ensure that the United Nations country teams plan for dedicated capacity to implement risk-informed development activities and that such activities in the field are reported to headquarters, including by monitoring their contribution to implementing the Sendai Framework, taking into account the reporting framework for Sustainable Development Goals.

20. Organizations partially support this recommendation.

21. While organizations support giving United Nations country teams access to capacity to implement risk-informed development activities, some note this should extend to capacity related not only to disaster but also to wider climate and conflict-related risks. While conflict is not covered by the Sendai Framework, interlinkages are evident. They further support country teams reporting to headquarters on risk-informed programming, but at a more consolidated and strategic level (i.e. not at the activity level).

22. Some observe that without adequate human and financial resources, effectively and efficiently implementing risk-informed humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities will be highly challenging.

23. While resident United Nations entities are critically important in building capacity, the role of non-resident organizations is also key in the provision of high-level policy advice on specific topics.

24. Finally, in addition to reporting to headquarters, there might be an added benefit in coordinating and reporting at the regional scale and exchanging lessons learned and success stories, so countries can benefit from regional specificities in implementing risk-informed development activities.
