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Excellency,

I am writing in response to your letter of 19 December 2022 inviting the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) to provide input to the thematic review of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in 2023. Disaster risk reduction is at the core of this year's HLPF theme, including the central provision of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction to "build back better." A risk-informed and prevention-oriented approach to economic, climate, and development policy at all levels is an imperative for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Integrating risk reduction into the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including emerging lessons learned from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, is fundamental for a resilient, green, and equitable recovery from the crisis.

UNDRR is pleased to offer the outcomes of the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held from 19 to 22 September 2022, the VIII Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the America and the Caribbean held from 28 February to 2 March 2023, and the Report of the Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Sendai Framework as inputs to the thematic reviews and to promote risk-informed and prevention-oriented policy and programmes across the work of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

The ECOSOC will play a critical role in underlining that reducing risk and building resilience are fundamental to achieving the SDGs and to transform environmental, social, financial and governance systems. UNDRR looks forward to working with your Office to advance the promotion of risk-informed and prevention-oriented policy and programmes, including in the upcoming Sustainable Development Goals Summit.

Yours sincerely,



Mami Mizutori
Special Representative of the Secretary-General
for Disaster Risk Reduction

H.E. Lachezera Stoeva
President of the Economic and Social Council
New York

Inputs from the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction to the thematic review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the 2023 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

This document provides a response to the request for inputs to the 2023 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), showcasing the views, findings, research, data and policy recommendations from intergovernmental bodies supported by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) on specific aspects of an SDG-driven response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the SDGs. UNDRR offers the inputs below on promoting risk-informed and prevention-oriented policy and programmes in contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The inputs derive from:

- the [Co-Chairs Statement](#) as the outcome document of the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction which took place in September 2022 in Brisbane, Australia;
- the [Declaration of Punta de Este](#) as the outcome document of the VIII Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas and the Caribbean, which took place in March 2023 in Punta del Este, Uruguay;
- the [Report of the Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030](#), coordinated by UNDRR, based on submissions made by Member States, non-State stakeholders, as well as analysis of data provided to the Sendai Framework Monitor (SFM), global and regional thematic studies, interviews, focus group discussions, a review of the Sendai Framework Voluntary Commitments, and a literature review.

(a) Progress, experience, lessons learned, challenges and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17 from the vantage point of your intergovernmental body, bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the SDGs and targets, including policy implications of their synergies and trade-offs;

SDG 6 (Water):

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the critical role of water to the achievement of the SDGs and the systemic nature of interconnected, cascading and compounding risks. Disasters can have significant impacts on water infrastructure, accounting for nearly 95 per cent of infrastructure loss and damage¹, causing damage to treatment plants, reservoirs, and distribution systems and leading to disruptions in the availability of clean drinking water and water supply for other activities, such as cooking, agriculture, and manufacturing processes. This has dire social consequences, for instance in terms of health risks, but also significant economic fallout and potential environmental damage, and can further exacerbate vulnerability to hazards.

Enhancing the resilience of water infrastructure and reducing disaster risks is thus paramount to achieving SDG6 on clean water and sanitation. However, there are major barriers and challenges that have prevented progress in terms of water infrastructure resiliency, including short-term thinking and planning which externalizes future risk creation,

¹ Sendai Framework Monitor: <https://sendaimonitor.undrr.org/>

lack of local institutional capacity, inadequate policy and regulatory frameworks and capacity to enforce them, and insufficient investment.

Additionally, the finance gap for making all water services climate resilient is growing. According to the World Bank, annual development finance for the water sector is estimated to be US\$ 9.9 billion per year, well below the US\$ 114 billion needed each² year simply to build the water supply and sanitation infrastructure to meet SDG targets 6.1 and 6.2, excluding the cost of operation.

Action towards sustainable water management is one of the best responses to build long-term resilience. Progress on sustainable water management needs to be a priority as we face more severe and frequent disasters. Water-related agreements made at the global level must be fully implemented through holistic, risk-informed water governance and management to build resilience for societies, economies and the environment. Integration with other environmental and developmental agreements, agendas and processes is critical.

SDG 7 (Energy):

COVID-19 evidenced the need to enhance our understanding on the systemic nature of risk. Public service capabilities to undertake and translate systems-based evaluations of multi-domain risks must be strengthened, so that policy responses can be coordinated. This is particularly true for interventions and policies at the water-energy-food nexus, taking a systemic approach to better understand and reduce the risks presented by, inter alia, a changing climate, conflict, supply chain vulnerabilities, declining productivity, ecosystems degradation, energy dependency or pollution.

SDG 9 (Infrastructure):

COVID-19 has highlighted the criticality of many infrastructure systems and services in responding to unforeseen threats and guaranteeing continuity of economic and social activity. At the same time, it showed how systems such as global trade and international supply chains lack resilience which can be a source of vulnerability.

To increase resilience and better withstand the impacts of future hazards, is necessary to ensure that resilience-building and disaster risk reduction measures are mainstreamed into the decision-making process in the planning, implementation, operation and maintenance of infrastructure projects. Financing for resilient infrastructure is an essential component for disaster risk reduction to improve the continuity of critical services provided by economic infrastructure systems – energy, transport, water, wastewater, waste, and communications – which serve as an essential backbone for the effective functioning of socioeconomic infrastructure services such as health, education, business, food industry, etc.

In 2022, UNDRR developed the [Principles for Resilient Infrastructure](#) that provide guidelines and criteria to help stakeholders (governments, private sector, regulators, and communities) better understand what infrastructure resilience entails, and to ensure that resilience is embedded into infrastructure decisions and investments. These Principles, which embed disaster and climate resilience in planning and construction of critical infrastructure, are now being piloted and implemented at the national level. UNDRR has also developed a Resilient Infrastructure Stress Test tool that helps governments and stakeholders identify vulnerabilities, prioritize necessary improvements, and gain a better understanding of the inter-dependencies between infrastructure systems.

² World Bank, 2016. [The Costs of Meeting the 2030 SDG Targets on Drinking Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene](#).

SDG 11 (Cities):

In an increasingly urbanised world, it is essential to integrate a multi-hazard, systems-based approach to disaster risk reduction into urban planning and development.

The Making Cities Resilient 2030 initiative is an important platform for cities and partners to collaborate to harness resources and solutions to build urban resilience. Governments, local governments and all stakeholders must further integrate disaster and climate resilience into urban planning and development processes.

Many challenges and solutions to achieve the 2030 Agenda are local. Disaster risk reduction endeavours are most likely to succeed through whole-of-society approaches that support community priorities and local institutions. Local government authorities are well-positioned to harness this critical pool of experience by creating an enabling environment and facilitating partnerships. They can be drivers in the concerted implementation of actions that are timely, socially inclusive, participatory, contextually relevant, and observant of local natural capital and cultural relevance. It is important for governments and stakeholders to strengthen collaboration with – and support to – sub-national entities, local civil society and business as well as communities to ensure that disaster risk reduction investments are community-driven and ‘fit-for-purpose’.

(b) Three key areas where transformative actions for accelerated progress have been successful, and three key areas where support is most urgently needed, with regard to the cluster of SDGs under review in July 2023.

Key areas where transformative actions for accelerated progress have been successful:

Disaster risk governance has been strengthened at all levels since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Sendai Framework in 2015. The number of countries with national strategies for DRR has risen from 55 in 2015 to 125 as at March 2022, making progress towards Target E of the Sendai Framework and Target B of SDG 11. National DRR strategies are essential to define, implement and monitor a country's risk reduction priorities and establishing the key roles and responsibilities of government and non-government actors, and identifying technical and financial resources. They support an all-of-government and an all-of-society approach to DRR, as well as its cross-sectoral implementation, and promote the integration of disaster risk reduction into national economic and development policies and plans. DRR strategies have been most effective when they adopt an all-of-society approach and people are at the heart of disaster prevention. Additionally, coherence between sustainable development, climate action, and disaster risk reduction will yield positive results in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. The development of these strategies is an opportunity to maximize synergies and policy and programmatic coherence across the SDGs.

Key areas where support is most urgently needed:

1. To secure a resilient future for all, we must change from *responding* to disasters to managing risk, to *prevent* disasters from manifesting in the first place. Prevention must tackle current and emerging hazards and risks – from environmental, technological to biological – rather than tackling each crisis in isolation. Policymakers at all levels need support to carry out this shift. To embed prevention in all decisions, it will be important to increase investments in disaster loss data collection and risk analytics, particularly in developing countries, including through technology transfers, so that policy and investment decisions can be made based on an accurate understanding of disaster risk.

2. Improved legal frameworks have been observed as contributing to significant structural changes in how different public and private actors assess disaster risk or their contribution to risk creation. Legislation and regulations are needed that define accountability and responsibility across all sectors and actors for DRR, and many countries require technical support in this area.
3. Resilience must be valued by the global financial system. The cost of disasters to the global economy is well over \$520 billion annually. We must address short-termism and market failures through correct pricing, accounting, and disclosure of risks, using fiscal and market-based measures, regulation, and other incentives. National financial authorities, credit rating agencies and capital market actors have an important role to play in better accounting for and accurately pricing disaster risks, while also increasing transparency on exposure to and management of disaster-related risks.

(c) Examples of specific actions taken to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic that also accelerate progress towards multiple SDG targets, including actions identified by your intergovernmental body, building on interlinkages and transformative pathways for achieving SDGs.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been increased recognition of the importance of transdisciplinary, intersectoral and multi-scale coordination within countries in building and improving DRR capacities, reducing duplication of efforts or financing, and facilitating less reactive approaches to managing risk.

One effective strategy for addressing siloed DRR agencies and policies has been the establishment of national task forces. For instance, in Australia, the National Resilience Taskforce was created to lead national efforts to mitigate the impacts of natural hazards on the country's critical infrastructure, economy, cities and regions. Egypt and Kyrgyzstan have both established unified data and DRR planning bodies to enhance cooperation among DRR stakeholders to enable more coordinated responses to disasters.

Furthermore, several countries have implemented intragovernmental, multisectoral working groups to overcome centralized and siloed DRR policies. For example, in Montenegro, multi-stakeholder working groups were established in efforts to enact the Guiding Principles of the Sendai Framework. Sweden's practice of forest fire risk governance has incorporated new mechanisms, including creating and maintaining semi-formal and informal coordination structures that facilitate cooperation, collaboration and partnerships.

(d) Assessment of the situation in the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic and within the respective areas addressed by your intergovernmental body, and policy recommendations, commitments and cooperation measures for promoting a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery from the pandemic while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Assessment of the situation in the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs

At the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, progress is still insufficient. While many countries have made progress in adopting a risk-

informed approach to development, the world is not on track to counter the rising tide of risk. Positively, disaster risk governance has been strengthened. But the number of disaster-affected people globally has increased compared with the baseline decade of 2005-2014; economic losses due to disasters remain high; disaster-related critical infrastructure damages continue being significant; investments in DRR remain low; and less than half of the countries in the world report the existence of multi-hazard early warning systems. Current disaster trends and impacts are concerning. The frequency and intensity of climate-related disasters are increasing, which exacerbate already existing social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities and risk further derailing the achievement of the SDGs. The changing risk landscape necessitates greater attention to new, emerging, and future disaster risks, including the impacts of climate change, unplanned and rapid urbanization, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, as well as rapid technological change, artificial intelligence, and frontier technologies.

Policy recommendations, commitments and cooperation measures for promoting a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery from the pandemic while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda

Business as usual is not an option; current development and investment practices must change so that they account for the creation of risk and contribute to the reduction of risk as a social good. Governance mechanisms must address existing and emerging risk. Governments and stakeholders must further integrate disaster and climate resilience into national and local development strategies and budgets and call on the scientific community, academia, civil society and the private sector to join them in enhancing the resilience of communities, through comprehensive disaster and climate risk management at national and local levels. Developing and implementing legislation, regulations and standards that define accountability and responsibility for DRR is also crucial.

Multi-hazard risk analysis and climate projections must guide risk-informed approaches to sustainable development and investment. A more holistic approach that draws on local, indigenous and traditional knowledge and experience combined with science, technology and innovation, is necessary to reduce existing and emerging risk.

Furthermore, international cooperation in all its manifestations, as outlined in the Sendai Framework and reinforced by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, should be scaled up to advance DRR as an integral component of development policies and strategies, building on existing regional and sub-regional organisations and mechanisms. Finance for disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation must be significantly scaled up, also enhancing accessibility to financing instruments. Consideration should be given to prioritization of the integration of disaster risk reduction with development and climate finance, potentially aligned with integrated national financing frameworks with a focus on prevention.

The UN Secretary-General's Early Warnings for All initiative aims to ensure every person on Earth is protected by early warning systems by 2027. People-centered multi-hazard early warning systems are a proven, effective, and feasible measure for mitigating the negative effects of realised risks, including from climate-related and other hazards. They save lives and provide a positive return on investment when acted upon in a timely manner and with sufficient resources. Yet only half the world has them. This initiative is co-led by UNDRR and WMO, and together with several UN agencies aims to close this protection gap once and for all. In doing so, they contribute to the achievement of numerous SDGs which are impacted every time a disaster strikes.

(e) Key messages for inclusion into the Political Declaration of the September 2023 SDG Summit.

- The success of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development rests on the ability of countries to reduce disaster risk, and that sustainable development cannot be attained while disasters continue to undermine development progress. It is critical to acknowledge that **risk-informed development policies** and investments in all sectors and at all levels is imperative to recover from COVID-19 and attain the 2030 Agenda, and commit to an all-of-government comprehensive approach to risk management and governance informed by multi-hazard disaster risk assessments to address the complex and systemic nature of disaster risk in all sectors;
- It is also critical to acknowledge that disaster risk is created by development and investment decisions that are not risk-informed, and that there has been an increase in risk and associated social and economic losses since 2019. There is a need to **recommit to reducing disaster risk and building resilience**; accelerating the pursuit of policy, investment and innovation to reduce disaster risk and build the resilience of countries, economies, communities and individuals to economic, social and environmental hazards; guided by the Sendai Framework and in line with the outcomes of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the midterm review of the Sendai Framework.
- It is important to emphasize the need for **increased means of implementation**; particularly capacity building, technology transfer and de-risked investment, to reduce disaster risk and build resilience. This includes the importance of investing in prevention and risk reduction, including applying a risk-lens across sectoral budgeting in addition to dedicated financing for disaster risk reduction. The declaration can benefit from a strong call for increased investment in quality, reliable, sustainable and **resilient infrastructure** and disaster risk data and capacity, and the development of innovative approaches to financing for disaster risk reduction in accordance with national circumstances, such as risk and resilience bonds, tracking financing for risk reduction in all sectors, and incorporating disaster risk within taxonomies for sustainable and green investments.
- It is important to recognize the higher impact of disasters in **countries in special situations** and call upon Member States to support efforts to address the unique challenges faced by these countries to accelerate progress on disaster risk reduction;
- Disasters **exacerbate gender inequalities** and undermine progress towards SDG 5. We recognize the need for inclusive gender-responsive disaster risk reduction strategies and plans, informed by the collection and analysis of disaggregated data and supported by appropriate financing.