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Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure for me to be here today.

I wish to express my gratitude to the Government of Mexico and to UNISDR for the organization of such a significant event.

Let me first of all share with you that following the devastating earthquake that hit Italy in August last year, the Italian civil protection system has been very much engaged in the post-emergency operations. This recalls once again the key importance to address disaster risk reduction as a priority for the safety of our communities.

In Italy the civil protection system at national level consists of a strong centralized coordination body, a Department within the Prime Minister's office.

We have developed a complex system involving: all levels of government, from ministers to regions and municipalities, the academia, the scientific community and the private sector. Furthermore, the Civil Protection Department is the coordinator of the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, established by a Prime Minister's decree, with the aim to promote interinstitutional cooperation at all levels in the field of Disaster Risk Reduction.

Such a complex system can only work effectively through a strong centralized coordination function, though highlighting at the same time the relevance of other stakeholders engaged in such holistic and inclusive disaster risk management approach. This condition is critical to ensure that the strategy works.

Moreover, Italy has been working on DRR in partnership with UNISDR over the last ten years and we are proud to announce that next year Italy will Chair of the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction and will be hosting the European Open Forum.

Disaster risk reduction policies must be implemented at all administrative levels, in particular at the local ones, represented by cities and mayors. However, without the active engagement and commitment of all society there is no sustainability of the action.

In light of the above I am pleased to recall with you that **last year in Florence** we organized, with the strong support of UNISDR, the **High Level Forum** on the implementation of Sendai at the local level, when I met mayors from all over the world.

Following the Italian experience, risk management plans shaped according to a set of priorities defined at local level have proven to be successful. A good example of this is the long term school safety program which after the devastating 2009 l'Aquila earthquake was converted into a National

Plan for Seismic Risk Prevention dedicated to public buildings, including schools. Such a program required a very efficient system of governance whereby different levels of government consolidated synergies and defined risk management plans through constant institutional dialogue.

So, in our experience the local dimension is crucial in making disaster risk reduction work.

Urban resilience is also a top priority on the Italian agenda considering the vulnerability and wide range of risks present throughout our country.

We believe that the challenges we face today in managing urban risks will be even greater tomorrow if we do not invest properly in disaster risk management taking into account all the phases of a disaster's cycle.

What can a mayor, as first authority of civil protection, first reference point for the citizens and for the community living on his or her territory, realistically do? First of all, I would like to make one thing clear. Resilience does not mean absolute safety. Absolute safety does not exist. This concept has to be delivered to the communities as a clear message.

Therefore, the attitude of citizens is highly relevant.

To this regard, I strongly recommend that one of our main objectives be keeping the memory of disasters alive in our communities as well as **raising risk awareness**. Raising the citizens and population's awareness has become an absolute imperative. **In Florence** last year we concluded that "enhancing preparedness and community resilience are the most effective and cost-effective ways to mitigate the impact and cost of responding to and recovering from disasters".

With this goal in mind, we have launched in Italy a national risk awareness campaign focused on our territory's major risks. Trained and informed volunteers provide the citizens on site with updated and complete information on the local risks and teach them how to behave in case of disaster.

I would also like to stress the importance, while enhancing resilience policies at the local level, that decision making processes be evidence based. How to put this in practice? Through risk identification and assessment.

Only after assessing risks and their potential consequences to human lives, ecosystem and economic activities, we can adequately plan prevention and preparedness measures. To this regard, please allow me to mention that a fundamental tool is the development of a disaster loss database, leading to the identification of the specific needs and priorities of a particular territory in order to ensure the adoption of adequate measures. In Italy we have developed a web-based national platform called Floodcat, where institutions at all level, including the local one, can upload data related to flood-related disasters of any scale.

Let me please add that among the goals set forth at the High Level Forum in Florence, institutional synergy with the private sector was raised as a key aspect. The Italian Civil Protection has recently signed an agreement with the league of industries of Italy. This collaboration aims to ensure that all new public and private investments are risk informed, thus fostering business resilience. Furthermore, the agreement aims at defining criteria and procedures for a sort of mutual "disaster recovery" among similar companies that will allow, in the shortest time possible, to



resume production of the affected companies; on the other hand, this collaboration also aims to work and to ensure, in case of disasters, fair and coherent answers to the citizens' needs on the territory.

Moreover, I wish to share that Italy considers International Cooperation for Disaster Risk Reduction among the priorities of its humanitarian and development agenda. We have carried out so far several programmes in this field, both in Europe as well as in Africa, Central and South America and Asia. Italian Institutions, at all levels - national, regional and local - are committed in providing international support, both through the multilateral track and bilateral and regional initiatives, for disaster risk reduction capacity-building and for the transfer and exchange of science, technology and innovation in disaster risk management activities.

In 2016 the Italian Cooperation implemented, in collaboration with FAO, WFP, UNICEF and NGOs, a humanitarian national response plan - worth 10 million euro - to support some African countries and its people severely affected by El Niño. An additional contribution of 600.000 euro was disbursed in 2016 to UNICEF and IFRC for initiatives to be implemented in the Small Islands of the Pacific. In October 2016, a further 8,7 million euro programme was approved to mitigate drought's effects and increase resilience through LRRD and long-term actions to be implemented from 2016 to 2018.

Moreover, last June our Ministry of Interior (through the National Fire Brigade) and our Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism became partners of the European Project STORM (*Safeguarding Cultural Heritage through the Technical and Organizational Resources Management*) which proposes an innovative approach to preserving cultural heritage and environment by mitigating the harmful impacts caused by climate change. Also our Regional Entities are involved in international initiatives, such as Lombardy, that is part of the European Project, READ, which aims at strengthening the resilience capacities assessment for critical infrastructures disruption.

Furthermore, thanks to an agreement that we, as Italian Civil Protection, signed in 2014 with WMO, DEWETRA, a real-time integrate platform for multi-risk forecasting, monitoring and prevention, implemented by CIMA Foundation, is available as an open source for many developing countries.

Let me please close my intervention by underlining that all that I mentioned thus far requires the strong involvement of the scientific community. Disaster risk reduction without science cannot and does not work.

The Italian National Civil Protection service provides for the scientific support in its structural system and has developed partnerships with the scientific community even outside the Department. This is an essential requirement for any decision we make.

Thank you for your attention.

