

OFFICIAL STATEMENT - SWITZERLAND

**by Ambassador Benno Bühlmann
Director of the Federal Office for Civil Protection
(FOCP) in Berne, Switzerland**

Global Platform Disaster Risk Reduction

Cancún, 24 May 2017

between 15h00 – 18h00

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here in Cancún representing Switzerland on this important occasion. We are grateful to the Government of Mexico for hosting and to UNISDR for organizing the 2017 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Being an Alpine state, Switzerland is exposed to many natural hazards. It took us decades and many setbacks to arrive at today's high standards in disaster risk management.

In the mid-19th century, deforestation was a root cause for devastating floods and mountain torrents. As a result, large-scale reforestation schemes were implemented and the first federal laws on forest and water management enacted in the 1870's.

Another 80 years passed before the first hazard maps were produced to protect towns and villages in the Swiss Alps against avalanches. The shift towards a more integrated risk management approach across all sectors only happened during the 1990's.

However, the challenges of today require a more holistic commitment to disaster risk reduction. Millions of people are moving into urban environments around the globe. The number of persons displaced by disasters has markedly increased in recent years. Rising temperatures, rapid population growth, unplanned urbanization and environmental degradation are bringing us to a critical point, where hard-won development achievements are at risk.

As disaster losses are basically development failures, it is high time to overcome silos and work in a new and more coordinated fashion.

Sendai, the Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement and the financing dimension need to be addressed in an integrated manner. They are mutually reinforcing parts of a resilient whole with the aim of safeguarding development gains and reducing poverty.

Switzerland stands ready to walk the talk.

By 2020, we will re-assess our national disaster risk assessment to further improve the protection of our citizens and encourage them to embrace personal responsibility for risk reduction.

We recently set up an inter-ministerial working group, which conducts a baseline assessment to identify national policy gaps in all relevant fields for achieving the SDG's, including disaster risk reduction. It will allow us to make recommendations to our government and take concrete actions.

The key findings will be reported to the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2018. We believe that this forum, which we helped shaping, must play a key role in integrating disaster risk reduction, climate change and the new sustainable development agenda.

In accordance with the Sendai Framework, we also revised our national Natural Hazards Strategy. The new strategy will be released this summer and puts stronger emphasis on the concept of resilience.

Last year we were among the driving forces that pushed for a set of indicators that are neither too complicated, nor too numerous. In Switzerland, there is no single entity in place, which could report on all

33 Sendai indicators. National monitoring of the Sendai indicators involves different cantonal authorities and federal agencies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Scaling up investments is another key concern for us.

Over the next four years Switzerland will allocate 1/6 of its international humanitarian aid budget to disaster resilience and preventive measures. Our national “Dispatch on International Cooperation” focuses on risk reduction as one of seven overarching goals.

In Addis Ababa, we fought for an ambitious financing framework, which is now an integral part of the 2030 Agenda and the key reference for incorporating climate and disaster resilience components in development financing.

Strategic partnerships are also essential.

As Co-Chair of the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, Switzerland has been advocating on many occasions that more investments are needed to protect development gains. We encourage donors to make better use of financial instruments and resources and avoid further fragmentation of an already complex funding landscape.

But for achieving our vision of a disaster-resilient world, something else is key: Our ability to break down global goals into local action and strengthen disaster resilience at the community level.

Last but not least, we are committed to take the gender dimension into account. Women are differently affected by disasters than men and have

different needs in the aftermath of a disaster. Women's participation and leadership is therefore critical in designing and implementing DRR programmes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me close by saying that disasters are already keeping people and countries in poverty. Climate change will make this trend only worse. Development objectives – such as the eradication of extreme poverty – will not be achieved without enhanced action to manage risks. There has never been a more opportune time to bring together effective disaster risk management policies, efforts to address climate change, and environmentally sound development practices.

While encouraging you to breathe life into the discussions over the coming days, I am honored to already invite you to the next Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Switzerland in May 2019.

Thank you for your attention.