

Address by Mr. Umar Fikry, Deputy Chief Executive of the National Disaster Management Authority to the South Asia Leadership Meeting organized by the Maldivian Red Crescent

Mr. Francesco Rocca, President, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and National President of the Italian Red Cross Association.

Mr. Ali Nashid, President of the Maldivian Red Crescent.

Ms. Aishath Noora Mohamed, Secretary General, Maldivian Red Crescent.

Distinguished senior representative from the Red Cross Red Crescent fraternity.

Asalaamaleykum and heartfelt welcome to the Maldives.

Ladies and gentlemen,

South Asia is exposed to a variety of hazards due to the geo-climatic characteristics of the region, making South Asia one of the most disaster prone regions in the world. It has been agonized by a variety of natural disasters, including some major events that highlight the extreme vulnerabilities of South Asian inhabitants. Devastation by recurring disasters, mostly in the form of floods and cyclones. Over the last decade (2005-15), a total of 481 events were reported in South Asia claiming around 135,000 lives, causing heavy economic losses for developing South Asian economies. In 2015, South Asia accounted for 64 per cent of total global fatalities that included 52 disasters and the loss of 14,647 lives – over 60% of those lives being lost in a single event – the 7.6 magnitude earthquake that devastated Nepal in April.

Asian Development Outlook 2019 published by the Asian Development Bank highlights that more than four in five people affected by natural hazards live in Asia. From 2000 to 2018, developing Asia was home to 84% of the 206 million people affected by disasters globally on average each year. With nearly 38,000 disaster fatalities annually in that period, the region accounted for almost 55% of 60,000 disaster fatalities worldwide, and it suffered 26% of the \$128 billion in economic damage. In Asia, 82% of disasters ensued from extreme weather events such as floods, storms, and droughts.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We live in terrifying times.

Climate change is no more a distant possibility rather a reality. South Asia is projected as one of the worst affected regions from global warming and climate change. The region is the home of about 1.5 billion of the world's population and a chunk of the global poor. Climate change impacts stand to slash

up to 9% off the South Asian economy every year by the end of this century, and the human and financial toll could be even higher if the damage from floods, droughts and other extreme weather events is included.

The figures contained in the ground breaking Asian Development Bank report entitled Assessing the costs of climate change and adaptation in South Asia predicts that by 2050, the collective economy of six countries – Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka – will lose an average 1.8% of its annual gross domestic product, rising to 8.8% by 2100. These figures are on the rise as we speak.

The implications for the Maldives is grave.

The intergovernmental panel on Climate Change special report on the impact of global warming of 1.5C above pre-industrial levels, found that coral reefs were likely to decline between 70% and 90% if the temperature increased to that level. If global warming reached 2C, more than 99% of coral reefs were projected to decline.

Scientists predict that going to 2C and above gets to a point where corals can no longer grow back, or it would lead to having annual bleaching events. The past three consecutive years the Maldives has been experiencing annual bleaching events, our reefs are stressed and our ecosystem is already being affected by the implications of climate change.

For the Maldives this means everything, our coral reefs, our biodiversity sector contributes 71% of the nation's employment, 49% of the public revenue, 62% of foreign exchange and 89% of the GDP. The Climate implication for the Maldives is not only an Environmental issue, it is an economic insecurity, it is a human rights issue and it will indeed become a humanitarian challenge.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Red Cross Red Crescent fraternity,

We have all come to an agreement on the fact that The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 provides the way forward to prevent and reduce disaster risk in order to achieve resilient and sustainable development. The Sendai Framework highlights the need for agreed regional and sub-regional strategies and mechanisms for cooperation and for progress to be reviewed by regional and global platforms.

At the 6th Asian Ministerial Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) in June 2014 and ISDR Asia Partnership (IAP) deliberations after the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (3WCDDRR), Asian countries and stakeholders agreed to develop an 'Asia Regional Plan for implementation of the Sendai Framework' (Regional Plan) to facilitate the cooperation and collaboration for building risk resilience in Asia.

The Asia Regional Plan aims to provide: (i) Broad policy direction to guide the implementation of the Sendai Framework in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the region; (ii) long-term road map, outlining a chronological pathway of the Sendai Framework structured around key milestones.

The Action Plan 2018-2020 follows the goals and directions set in the Asia Regional Plan and analyzes the progress made since its development. It also provides key highlights of the achievements made by the Member States against the milestones agreed for this period, and extends the scope of the two-year Action Plan for the next biennium.

My plea to you today is through your network of regional Red Cross Red Crescent societies, come up with a strategic sustenance mechanism to support the governments of South Asia implement and achieve this Asia Regional Plan.

National Societies with its technical and volunteer capacities, in many occasions that outnumbers available resources in governments, can play a vital role in realizing the Sendai Framework.

Disaster Risk Management, especially in creating resilient communities require hands and boots in the ground working with communities, reaching to the most vulnerable, as the World Disasters Report 2018 put it; we need to reach to those out of sight - people we fail to see; those out of reach – the people we can't get to; those out of the loop – the people we unintentionally exclude; those out of money – the people we don't prioritize and those out of scope – the people who aren't our problem. And simply reminding ourselves the words of Henry Dunant "to help, without asking whom!"

Before I conclude, let me acknowledge and appreciate the sincere dedication of Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers across the globe working tirelessly addressing to the most vulnerable and providing humanitarian assistance. Your work continues to inspire all of us. A special appreciation to the Maldivian Red Crescent who has been our most awe-inspiring partner in resilience here in the Maldives.

Together we can make South Asia resilient. Thank you.