



Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and Water

Summary of the lunch meeting by the Special Envoy for Disaster Risk Reduction and Water on 6 October 2015 in New York

Dr. Han Seung-soo, the Special Envoy for Disaster Risk Reduction and Water, organized a lunch meeting on 6 October 2015, inviting representatives of the Permanent Missions which are active in the field of water and disasters. The event was attended by 29 representatives of Missions, including 9 permanent representatives, as well as some partner UN organizations. The objective of the meeting is to introduce the work of the Special Envoy since the beginning of his appointment in December 2013 and hear from the Members States about the suggestion on how to mainstream water-related disaster risk reduction in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Dr. Han opened the meeting with his opening address to present his role as the Special Envoy in the UN system and partnership with other UN agencies. He emphasized importance of “preparedness” as exemplified in recent disasters including the earthquake in Chile and Tropical Cyclone Pam that hit Vanuatu in March, 2015 coinciding with the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. He also stressed the significance of sharing experiences and lessons learned from the peers. He presented some numerical evidence to indicate that disasters can wipe out all the development gains that have painstakingly been achieved. In closing his address, Dr. Han invited all the Missions to the 2nd UN Special Thematic Session on Water and Disasters, which will be organized in UN Headquarters, New York on November 18th, 2015 by the Secretary-General, the Special Envoy, and High-level Experts and Leaders Panel on Water and Disasters (HELP).

Following the Dr. Han’s address, Mr. Glenn Dolcemascolo, Climate Change Coordinator of ISDR, highlighted the relevant points in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030 from the perspective of water and disasters. He introduced some areas for which integrated water resources management, including transboundary water management, and/or ecosystem approach can help reduce disaster risks.

Dr. Kenzo Hiroki, Coordinator of HELP, presented cases and analytical evidence including a short video of Tsunami at the time of East Japan Great Earthquake in March 2011 showing that the water-related disasters are increasing in numbers and impacts. 95 percent of all the disasters in the world are water-related. He suggested practical ways for international community to address the challenges. He expressed an expectation to the participating countries to lead the discussion on water and disasters at the UN by organizing their own dialogue session at the occasion of the Special Thematic Session in November.

During the interactive session, several distinguished permanent representatives made remarks responding to these speeches. These include the comments on the needs for the coordination between DRR and climate change issues and the importance of SDG14 from the SIDS perspectives (Fiji), a call for the support to the draft resolution deciding Day of Tsunami (Japan), recommendations to work closely with the Group of Friends (GoF) of DRR and GoF of Water (Netherlands and Finland).

The suggestions by the participants will be reflected in the final development of the programme of the 2nd UN Special Thematic Session in November as well as the workplan of the Special Envoy.