



Ulla Tørnæs' tale ved seminaret for internationale udviklingsministre

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International Workshop 16-18 November, Copenhagen on “Strengthening of Community Resilience to cope with water related natural disasters in coastal areas”

Dear participants, I am extremely pleased to be able to take part in the closing session of this very timely and pertinent international workshop that opened two days ago.

I am happy to see such a broad participation of representatives from governments, local communities, NGOs and independent experts.

It is important to have covered all aspects and combine different approaches.

I have with satisfaction learnt, that gender aspects in disaster risk reduction were also raised during the workshop. I believe that we should continue to look into how we can better avail of the rich potential, women represent, in the context of resilience of local communities.

Almost a year has passed since the Tsunami struck in Asia.

The scale of this catastrophe seriously shook the world. The tsunami last year may have been of a historically unusual strength and geographical scope, but we all know that natural disasters strike again and again, season after season.

Asia is the region most heavily affected by natural disasters. Six of the countries that make up this region are represented in this workshop. During the last 100 years, in these countries alone, one million people have lost their lives, and several hundred million people have been seriously affected by water related natural disasters.

Of course, there are many other types of disasters that can be deadly and relentlessly destructive to the communities experiencing them. Just a few weeks ago, we saw, how the earthquake that hit Pakistan, India and Afghanistan is seriously affecting millions of people.

According to the World Disasters Report, natural disasters are happening more often and natural disasters are having a more dramatic impact on the world, both in terms of human and economic costs.

While the number of lives lost is said to have declined in the past 20 years, the number of people affected by natural disasters has, during the same period, tripled.

According to the International Federation of the Red Cross, annual costs from such disasters, increased from an estimated 3.9 billion dollars in the 1950s, to 63 billion dollars in the 1990s.

An amount that exceeds the total annual Official Development Assistance (ODA).

It is always the poorest in the countries hit that are most affected.

The livelihoods of poor people are more vulnerable and fragile than that of wealthier people. The resilience of poor people to disasters is significantly lower. Analyses have shown that on average, a disaster in a developing country kills up to 10 times more people, than a similar disaster in a developed country. Poverty and exposure walk hand in hand. Let me here remind you of the

Millennium Development Goals, which will be difficult to achieve unless disaster risks are carefully considered and better incorporated into development work.

The coastal zone is particularly at risk. Today, globally, an estimated 10 million people experience flooding each year due to storm surges and typhoons. Climate changes and increasing populations in coastal areas mean that this figure is likely to rise in the future.

Disasters undermine the results created from development investments and thus constitute a serious obstruction to sustainable development and poverty eradication. Development investments, which fail to consider disaster risks, may increase the vulnerability of the people that they are aimed at helping.

One dollar invested in prevention of disasters reduces the cost seven times on rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction, it is estimated by the World Bank.

Not only are the local communities most affected by disasters, but also in the first hours and days after a disaster, they are the first to help their neighbours in rescue operations and rebuilding.

It is, therefore, key that local communities are strengthened to better cope more adequately with natural disasters so that more people will survive and their recovery will be easier.

This is why strengthening community capacities for dealing with disasters on a local level is so crucial.

Developing countries can reduce the impact of natural disasters, through

strengthened national efforts and enhanced bilateral, regional and international cooperation.

I am, therefore, pleased to learn that the workshop, you have actively been part of over the last three days, has resulted in a number of concrete recommendations, which can be put to use in our combined future efforts to strengthen the resilience of disaster ridden communities.

As former Minister for Education, I am particularly happy to see that more emphasis on the role of education on disaster risk reduction in school curricula, is a recommendation ranked very high by you.

The recommendations include tools on how community based disaster management activities can be efficiently linked to national policies.

They also address how to improve disaster risk reduction through development work, in particular through coastal zone management and the development of livelihoods.

Finally, they consider how to strengthen communities to facilitate recovery activities.

I am confident that this workshop has provided concrete and useful guidance on where we need more expertise and knowledge sharing, who should do what and what are the next steps.

Local governments, NGOs and community organisations have a particularly important role to play. As key stakeholders they are the ones being able to ensure long-term commitment to sustainable disaster reduction management.

The results of this workshop, I believe, in a very practical way build on and support the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, adopted at the World Conference in Kobe, Japan, earlier this year.

By providing some concrete recommendations on how to implement the Framework for Action you have carried the process forward.

I also believe, that the recommendations on strengthening community resilience will show helpful, not only to the countries in the Indian Ocean region, but also to disaster ridden countries in other parts of the world.

Denmark is committed to follow up upon the results of this workshop. We will have a closer look at the recommendations to see how they can give guidance to our work.

For example we will look closer at how better integration of community based disaster management activities can improve Danish development and humanitarian assistance.

We will also provide assistance to the UN's International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN-ISDR) in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

To encourage regional follow-ups to this workshop and the distribution and efficient implementation of its results, we will provide financial support to the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre.

I would like to conclude by thanking the UN-ISDR for their close cooperation during the preparation of this workshop.

We look forward to have the opportunity to present the results of this workshop next week in Geneva at the UN Interagency Task Force meeting. Finally, a special thank to you all for active participation, and for providing the many good recommendations that will guide our way forward.

Thank you for coming.

I wish you a safe journey back.

Tags

Politisk tale, Venstre

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