2022 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

Australia’s Official Statement

Excellencies, Heads of Delegations and distinguished guests, Australia is delighted to participate in the 2022 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. I thank the Government of Indonesia and United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction for organising this event.

As the Australian Government is currently in caretaker mode pending the outcome of the federal election, Australia’s Statement will be restricted to existing policies or initiatives.

Australia is pleased to be hosting the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction between 19 and 22 September 2022 in Brisbane. The 2022 Conference provides an important opportunity for the Asia-Pacific community to review our risk reduction efforts, to share and learn about innovative and practical solutions, and to translate global outcomes from the Global Platform for implementation across our region, as we head towards the Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework in May 2023.

Since we last met in Geneva three years ago, the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires burnt more than 24 million hectares during Australia’s hottest and driest year on record, following years of drought across much of the country. In February and March of this year, widespread severe thunderstorms and rain events resulted in the most severe floods in Australia’s recorded history. Add to this the complex and compounding impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Australia comes to the 2022 Global Platform with widespread lived experience of disasters.

Disaster risks are changing in Australia, as they are across the globe. We recognise that disaster management arrangements must change accordingly to meet the increasing challenges posed by climate change, a growing population and the compounding and cascading impact of disasters across society.

Following the 2019-20 bushfires, Australia undertook a major review of disaster management arrangements.

The review recognised collaboration across all levels of Government – Australian, state and territory, and local governments – is required to successfully implement and deliver its recommendations. These recommendations support and align with Australia’s National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework – Australia’s guiding framework for collective action to reduce disaster risks, aligned with the Outcome and Goal of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

Australia has established the National Recovery and Resilience Agency (Agency) – a stand-alone agency to provide national leadership and strategic coordination to reduce disaster risk, enhance resilience and ensure effective relief and recovery to all hazards.

The Agency is driven by the guiding principle, “locally led, locally understood, and locally implemented”, and works with local communities and state and territory governments on a range of key initiatives that support disaster risk reduction and recovery. The Agency’s locally-led approach is underpinned by a national network of Recovery Support Officers, who live and work in communities across Australia.

A National Emergency Declaration Act has been passed, enabling the Australian Government if required to declare a state of national emergency and quickly support state and territory governments in their response and recovery following a disaster.
Australian Government

The Australian Climate Service has been established to support better decision-making, through improving climate and disaster risk and impact analysis, drawing together expertise of multi-disciplinary scientists and statisticians to provide comprehensive scientific, socio-economic and demographic data.

The newly formed Natural Hazards Research Australia is also delivering a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary research program focused on natural hazard resilience and disaster risk reduction to support critical stakeholders prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters.

Nationally consistent emergency warnings now ensure communities know what to do, no matter where in the country they are.

Australia has increased the funding for targeted disaster risk reduction programs. The new Preparing Australia Program invests in the long-term resilience of communities by supporting risk mitigation and limiting the impact of future disasters. New investments are delivering critical flood mitigation infrastructure and also mitigating the impact of coastal and estuarine disasters on communities and economies.

Communities are being supported to ‘build back better’ with funding from the National Bushfire Recovery Fund and the jointly-funded Commonwealth-State/Territory Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements Category D ‘betterment funds’.

Australia’s national review to inform the Sendai Framework Midterm Review is taking stock of implementation progress to-date, while also setting a path forward. The review complements the development of the Second National Action Plan to implement the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework. Through these concurrent processes, a comprehensive and shared domestic vision for systemic disaster risk reduction is being developed across governments, the private sector, not-for-profit sector and communities.

Australia is part of the Asia-Pacific region, which is unenviably known as the most disaster prone in the world. Our region contains ten of the fifteen countries considered most at risk of natural hazards. Over the two decades prior to COVID-19 in the Pacific, disasters affected 11 per cent of the population and cost 7 per cent of Gross Domestic Product. The COVID-19 pandemic itself is resulting in even more severe impacts. As we face increasing disaster risks, building resilience is more important than ever – across the region as well as at home.

Australia’s long-standing commitment to the Sendai Framework is at the core of our regional engagement to lessen the impacts of future shocks and to assist our neighbours to respond to disasters. We build disaster and climate resilience by helping partners use risk data to inform decisions, by assisting them to better prepare for hazards, and by supporting early action to minimise disaster impacts. Australia’s humanitarian and development efforts support local governments and community-based organisations. This ensures our actions are informed by local and traditional knowledge, support local priorities, and contribute to local capacity and accountability.

Australia is committed to ensuring disaster risk reduction is prioritised and inclusive, so that no one is left behind when faced with disaster. Australia recognises women and girls not just as inequitable victims of disasters, but as community leaders, first responders and agents of change. Similarly, people with disabilities have unique knowledge and experience essential to the survival and resilience of their communities.

Together we are and will continue to work towards a resilient, safe and prosperous future.