The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the consequences of systematically underinvesting in resilience. Even before the world brings the COVID-19 disaster under control, we will all be demanding: "Never again." We can never go back to business as usual. At the same time, we know that there is another crisis unfolding – the climate emergency. Climate extremes and slow onset events due to climate change are happening more frequently and with greater intensity than expected. The human race has never before faced such large and complex threats. Today, 90% of disasters are linked to hydrometeorological hazards. Disasters caused by natural hazards displace more people globally than war. Strengthening resilience of and integrating risk-centred approaches into all sectors and societies is critical. We must recover and build back better so that we are prepared for the future.

The impacts of climate change and the COVID-19 crisis underline the systemic, cascading and compound nature of risks and the need to strengthen the resilience of our societal systems in the face of the evolving and complex nature of risks. The socio-economic impacts of the pandemic crisis have added to existing stresses and shocks, including those linked to climate change. More than ever before, it is now vital to address this systemic nature of risk, strengthen resilience and adapt our societies to these new realities.

The European Green Deal, at the heart of the EU’s recovery plan, is an opportunity for the EU to lead and put risk reduction approaches for climate action at the centre of its governance framework. As such, the revised EU Strategy on Climate Change Adaptation, setting out an ambitious and tangible roadmap of transformative actions, can strengthen resilience today for the risks of tomorrow.

“BRIDGING DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION”

Taking a holistic perspective, which embeds the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, will be key for this new Strategy. An ambitious Strategy would support the EU in accelerated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, the targets set out in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the Paris Agreement. In particular, the Sendai Framework underlines that approaching adaptation to climate change and disaster risk reduction in a coherent manner is a necessary condition to achieve sustainable development. Climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction go hand in hand, as they complement and strengthen each other.

Everyone is affected by disasters, but not everyone is affected equally. The elderly, people living with disabilities, the poor and marginalised are most vulnerable. More needs to be done to identify the most vulnerable groups in order to support them and ensure that no one is left behind. This should be an important element within the external dimension of the revised EU Strategy on Climate Change Adaptation. When looking beyond the EU’s borders, the Strategy should aim to further strengthen international adaptation measures through supporting resilience plans and promoting the exchange of good practices.

Enhancing disaster resilience, preventing climate and disaster-related risks, and protecting those left furthest behind requires moving beyond business as usual and engaging all of society in climate and disaster risk management. It is critical that the revision of the EU Strategy on Climate Change Adaptation strives to leverage action on climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies for strong, coherent governance to manage risk.
The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) is the UN focal point for disaster risk reduction and custodian of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. UNDRR sits at the centre of the UN system for reducing risk, supporting Member States in reducing disaster risks and building resilience. It convenes and coordinates risk reduction activities towards a more resilient future and protects gains made towards the Sustainable Development Goals. UNDRR welcomes and supports the updating of the EU’s Climate Change Adaptation Strategy that will guide the region’s direction and next set of priority actions addressing the impacts of climate change.

This document provides a set of risk-centred recommendations critical to informing the revision of the existing EU Strategy on Climate Change Adaptation. The proposals stem from an extensive consultation process of UNDRR partners and stakeholders, including National Sendai Framework Focal Points, UNDRR Advocates of the Making Cities Resilient Campaign, and members of the European Science and Technology Advisory Group on DRR (E-STAG).

There are several good examples of strategies and governance structures that take an integrated approach to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

The Portuguese National Prevention Strategy (Portugal’s national DRR strategy) identified measures that address climate change risks, such as the increase of water retention capacity to be used in periods of drought. This led to the implementation of structural interventions for river regularization and flood prevention to frequently affected areas.

Several countries including Italy and Croatia have multi-stakeholder national platforms which supported the development of their national DRR strategies. The platforms are made up of stakeholders from across different sectors of the economy and society including from climate change, DRR and environment spheres.

Furthermore, the Delta Programme in the Netherlands is another good practice of coherence between CCA and DRR through the institutional arrangements of the Delta Programme that are underpinned by law with long term commitments of all authorities. The Delta Programme brings together extensive knowledge on the impacts of climate change on hydrology, society and the economy and the field of flood risk management.

These examples provide good practices which can be built upon to develop a systemic integrated approach at all levels of governance.
UNDRR welcomes the Blueprint for a new ambitious EU strategy including the focus on incorporating climate change costs and risks into fiscal frameworks and climate proofing infrastructure, and recommends that this revision process also consider to:

1. **Elevate the importance of strong risk governance to manage climate change through supporting European, national and local resilience plans as frameworks for the practical integration of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation agendas**, including:
   - With the strengthened political commitment to disaster resilience, there is an opportunity to build a systemic approach towards DRR and CCA, with strong risk governance at its core;
   - Encourage mutual learning and peer monitoring through local and national peer reviews dedicated to climate change adaptation, to further support implementation of risk reduction and adaptation measures at local, national and regional levels;
   - Reinforce attention on urban resilience and adaptation measures at city level;
   - Focus on risk-centred adaptation at the national and local levels;
   - Link local adaptation plans with local DRR emergency/contingency and land use plans;
   - Redirect investments to ensure that local level resilience strategies are put in place to generate cost-effective and sustainable implementation.

2. **Prioritize and strengthen the coherence of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation strategies**, including:
   - Support to Member States in the development of their National Adaptation Plans (NAP) in line with national DRR strategies, through tools, guidance and capacity building;
   - Networks of NAP teams and National Sendai Framework Focal Points at national level;
   - Connection of stakeholders from DRR and CCA communities, at local, national and regional levels, engaged in joint efforts to drive the resilience agenda in Europe and beyond;
   - Use of inter-operable and common sources of risk data used in developing NAPs and DRR Strategies.

3. **Invest in disaster resilience**, including:
   - Shift fiscal firepower away from activities that contribute to climate change; and simultaneously support communities and sectors particularly exposed to climate change risks, impacts and natural hazards which may be at risk of capital flight;
   - Dedicated catastrophe funds and credit facilities involving EU financial institutions including EIB and EBRD, complementing the recovery support provided through the EU Solidarity Fund whose flexibility and scope remains limited;
   - Strengthen sustainable finance action to prevent finance flowing into areas that build in disaster risk. As part of this apply a 'Think Resilience' test to make disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and resilience a baseline requirement for all European finance instruments;
   - Explicitly require institutional investors and asset managers, as well as company directors, to integrate disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and resilience into their decisions.

4. **Incentivise Member States to improve data collection and develop a better understanding of risk through connecting to real time policy**, including:
   - Promote data collection in Member States, since access to relevant and easily accessible data will ensure climate change can be effectively integrated into risk management practices;
   - Make use of Sendai Framework monitoring results to help develop the understanding of climate impacts and connect to real time policy;
   - Look into using big data and mobile devices for improving data management for CCA and DRR;
   - Improve data collection and disaggregation on groups, communities and sectors that are the most vulnerable to climate impacts.

5. **Develop a more robust focus on resilient infrastructure and risk scenarios**, including:
   - Develop high impact risk scenarios, as part of broader risk scenarios to ensure resilience in all sectors and policies. The stress testing of risk reduction and resilience capabilities in the face of complex climate risk scenarios can inform the strategic orientation of NAPs and DRR Strategies;
   - Increase the focus on resilience of infrastructure to climate-related disasters by strengthening regulations, fostering PPPs and enforcing multi-hazard risk assessments.
6. Highlight the systemic nature of risks and invest in approaches aimed at reducing the cascading impact of risks through the use of comprehensive and integrated risk management, such as nature-based solutions that create co-benefits for biodiversity strengthening.

7. Considering the importance of integrating DRR and resilience building when addressing climate change adaptation, it would be imperative to link the Strategy’s goals and priorities with those of the Sendai Framework of Disaster Risk Reduction.

UNDRR looks forward to supporting the above recommendations, as well as possible areas of strengthened engagement with the European Union. UNDRR has a wealth of experience supporting risk knowledge development, through systemic risk analysis, DRR capability stress testing and promoting a systemic approach to climate related disasters in support of DRR and wider resilience building. UNDRR’s expertise and network can help advance peer learning exercises on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction at all levels of governance and with a wide range of stakeholders, including the private sector and academia.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions to these UNDRR recommendations were made by the national Sendai Framework focal points from Austria, Croatia, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden and Switzerland, as well as scientific experts from the E-STAG network and Advocates of the UN Making Cities Resilient Campaign.