



STATEMENT BY MR MARWAN JILANI,
PERMANENT OBSERVER OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS
AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
AT THE 2010 HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
New York, 1 July 2010

Mr. President,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the Council on behalf of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The IFRC and its member Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies are fully committed to contribute effectively towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In the words of the UN Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-Moon “meeting the goals is everyone’s business”; and it has certainly been the business of the IFRC as the world’s largest humanitarian organisation to lead the way in tackling the most pressing humanitarian challenges in today’s world.

Food insecurity, disasters, overlapping climatic extremes, poverty and rapid urbanization are today’s major humanitarian challenges, that combined pose an alarming and overwhelming threat to communities, as we have witnessed in Haiti. Our annual World Disaster Report to be launched later this year is focusing on urbanisation of disasters as a 21st Century challenge. The report states that “by 2010, there were 2.5 billion urban dwellers in low and middle-income nations, this is roughly the world’s total population in 1950. Africa is usually considered to be predominantly rural but its urban population is now larger than that of North America”.

The report goes on to state that the links between urban poverty and disaster risk are likely to be increased by climate change. Tens of millions of urban dwellers face, or will face, life threatening risks from increased intensity of storms, flooding and heat waves associated with climate change, with impacts on their livelihoods, asset bases, environmental quality and future prosperity. Here it is largely those people and nations that have contributed least to global warming which face the greatest risks.

Around the world, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are working with city leaders and civil society to address urban challenges by aiming also at the root causes. They focus on promoting diversity, opposing discrimination, and joining in efforts to provide decent social services and to ensure that adequate protection, preventive health-care, education and disaster risk reduction measures are implemented. Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers are at the heart of the Movement’s endeavour to strengthen urban communities.

To highlight and address such challenges the IFRC is co-organising together with UNISDR, UN-Habitat and co-hosted by the Permanent missions of Japan and Indonesia, the Humanitarian Side Event on Disaster Risk Reduction in an Urbanizing World. We are also contributing to the panel discussion titled “From relief to recovery, lessons learned from the experience in Haiti” to be organised by OCHA and UNDG. The Nepalese Red Cross and the Haitian Red Cross respectively will represent the IFRC in these panel discussions.

Mr. President,

By focusing on our mandate and our added value as a volunteer and community based global humanitarian network, the IFRC and our member National Societies are committed to gender equality and the empowerment of women. We are increasingly focusing on integrating a gender perspective into our policy framework as well as our operational activities.

Concretely, we have included in our plans for Haiti, for example, prioritizing women's access to health services including reproductive health; the role of women in agriculture and food security; the equal participation of women in camp management committees; addressing gender in shelter design; land and house tenure; include women in water and sanitation management committees; equal employment opportunities and equal pay for women in our operations; prioritizing single female and parent headed household during relief distribution. Our work on gender based violence and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) was highlighted by the appointment of a GBV delegate in Haiti as well as by integrating those important aspects into the overall plan of action.

Mr. President,

As highlighted by the Ministerial Declaration, women are disproportionately and negatively affected by many of the challenges and crisis we face today. In our area of work, we continue to witness how women are disproportionately affected by the impact of natural disasters, the scarcity of resources, and the lack of access to adequate health and education services.

Furthermore, the impact of the global financial crisis and the economic uncertainty on humanitarian and development assistance remains a major concern for the IFRC ~~and its member National Societies~~. Funding for humanitarian aid is failing to keep pace with the growing humanitarian need, and a disproportional amount is being spent on reactive relief. Only a fraction is spent on preparedness and risk reduction, and on attempts to reduce vulnerabilities. As stated in the UN Secretary General's report ~~Keeping the Promise~~, "reducing disaster risk and increasing resilience to natural hazards in different development sectors can have a multiplier effect and accelerate achievement of the MDGs".

In this context, we believe that this session of ECOSOC is held in an opportune moment for all to take stock of the gaps as well as successes of the collective efforts to achieve the MDGs and to commit the needed resources, investment, and the right mind-set and policies in order to ensure the way forward.

In conclusion Mr. President, and in fulfilment of our mission on behalf of the most vulnerable, we are committed to scale up our efforts and focus, on women's access to health services, including reproductive health; on integration of gender perspectives and active role of women in our disaster response management system; on equal employment opportunities and equal pay in our operations; and on active engagement in the prevention of gender based violence; as well as overall community capacity building and empowerment.

Thank you