FOREWORD FOR AD-MINISTER – SPECIAL ISSUE ON: DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS EDUCATION: SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT BUSINESS 15/07/16

An in-depth study carried out by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) three years ago concluded that economic losses from disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, cyclones and flooding were reaching an average of $250 billion to $300 billion per year.

It is clear that many countries would not pass a stress test of their fiscal resilience to a 1-in-100 year loss. The question has to be asked: How many businesses would pass such a test?

Small and medium enterprises are particularly at risk. A single disaster can wipe out a business overnight. A 2013 survey of disaster prone cities across the Americas showed that less than 15% of companies with fewer than 100 employees had a business continuity or crisis management plan in place.

In a world where climate change is playing havoc with preconceived ideas about extreme weather events - their intensity, regularity and geography - it is clear that the bar has to be raised on the visibility and relevance of disaster risk management as a key element of business strategy.

Disasters not only directly affect business performance when critical infrastructure is destroyed and global supply chains are disrupted, they affect employment opportunities and the quality of life for people across the globe if private sector investment in new cities and towns is not risk-informed.

Given replacement or repair costs, we cannot afford to lose expensive critical infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, roads and public utilities to hazards such as earthquakes and floods. The same is true of manufacturing facilities which have to close because they were built on a flood plain or at the bottom of an unstable hillside.

We are still in the early days of engaging the private sector in the overall effort to reduce disaster risk and disaster losses but progress so far, including this volume, is promising. There is now a clear commitment at the highest level across UN Member States and in the UN family, to ensure that the private sector is fully engaged in disaster risk reduction efforts.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction that was adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, in March, 2015, makes clear the important role that the private sector can and should play in building resilience to disasters across the world.

The truth is that private investment largely determines disaster risk. In most economies 70% or more of overall investment is made by the private sector.

In 2015, the adoption of the Sendai Framework was the first milestone of the 2030 Agenda. The others were the agreement on Financing for Development, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Paris Agreement on climate change. These outcomes are mutually dependent because increasing disaster risks, climate change, poverty and inequality are all markers of unsustainability.

Escalating disaster losses magnified by climate change are an increasing threat to low and middle-income countries, especially small island developing states, robbing them of resources that could otherwise be invested in poverty eradication and other social expenditures in order to achieve the SDGs.

The Private Sector Alliance for Disaster Resilient Societies, ARISE, was launched with a hundred members in November 2015, building on the success of earlier UNISDR sponsored initiatives with the global business community.

It is the launch platform for our engagement with the private sector and aims to realise a substantial reduction in economic losses from disasters and achieving reductions in disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, as called for in the Sendai Framework.

UNISDR and ARISE, with support from the Federal Government of Germany's Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), partnered with Florida International University's Extreme Events Institute (FIU-EEI) and 12 leading business schools to introduce disaster risk management to curricula for business students.

This present publication should give that initiative a welcome boost and raise awareness beyond the countries whose academics have contributed so thoughtfully to the development of the business case for disaster risk reduction. These include Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, India, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru and the United States.

I would like to thank the authors for their seminal contributions to advancing the incorporation of disaster risk management in business school teaching and research.

Not only have the authors shed light on the business opportunities associated with disaster risk management, highlighting the importance of business continuity in the education of future managers, but they have also confirmed the importance of research and alliances between academia, governments and the private sector.

They have done the cause of resilience a great service.

Robert Glasser

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