Philippine private sector network hosts international knowledge exchange on disaster management

25 March 2019, MANILA—Of the 172 countries covered by the 2018 World Risk Index, the Philippines ranked third due to its very high exposure to extreme natural hazards.To prevent greater loss of human lives, the country has made great strides in enhancing its disaster risk reduction and management programs, policies, and initiatives. Meaningful partnerships among all sectors of society are ever more vital in reducing the negative impacts of natural hazards.

To strengthen joint efforts in private sector involvement in disaster risk reduction and management, the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF)—together with the Connecting Business Initiative (CBi), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA)—recently hosted a knowledge exchange at the PDRF Emergency Operations Center in Clark, Pampanga.

Participating in the event were representatives from CBi partner networks in the Pacific and Southeast Asia, including the Fiji National Disaster Management Office, the Vanuatu Business Resilience Committee, the Pacific Island Private Sector Organisation (PIPSO), and the Private Sector Association for Disaster Resilience (Perkumpulan Perusahaan Tangguh Bencana). UN OCHA New York Business Partnership Advisor Karen Smith and UN OCHA Philippines Head Mark Bidder also delivered messages emphasizing the need for inter-regional collaboration among private sector groups.

Highlighting the significance of the event, Bidder said, "Effective coordination is about people coming together to share expertise, share knowledge, to plan together—it's hard to do effectively in the midst of a disaster. It happens most effectively in preparedness mode. And that's exactly what we're doing here today. We're meeting, sharing; we are looking at innovations, sharing ideas—we are planning for the future."

"CBi puts significant focus on the Asia Pacific region given its wide range of natural hazards as well as man-made risks and complex emergencies. One of our primary goals is to ensure that everyone is engaged in the process of community development," added Smith.

Being the first private sector-led operations center in the world, the PDRF Emergency Operations Center serves as a model for building local business disaster management networks and creating an innovative platform that fosters partnerships among the private sector, national government agencies, local government units, and local and international humanitarian groups.

"CBi brings together private sector groups from around the world for humanitarian causes. It demonstrates the role of private companies in helping in disasters. As one of its founding members, PDRF continues to play a leadership role in this important area," said PDRF President Butch Meily.

To share its best practices, PDRF held a workshop that helps develop national/regional frameworks for preparedness, response, and resilience. Other participatory activities looked at avenues for collaboration toward building a joint public-private emergency operations center in the Pacific. The two-day event also included a tour of the NDRRMC Emergency Operations Center and the Makati City Emergency Operations Center to explore current coordinating mechanisms connecting the private sector to the national and local government agencies.

PDRF is one of the thirteen private sector network members of CBi, an initiative jointly launched by UN OCHA and UNDP during the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in 2016. Serving as the critical link among businesses, government agencies, civil society groups, international institutions, and local government units, PDRF acts as the Philippines' major private sector vehicle and coordinator for disaster resilience.

Source: "WorldRiskReport 2018, Focus: Child Protection and Children's Rights" by Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft and Ruhr University Bochum – Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict (IFHV).