

## Philippines takes the lead at UN Private Sector Disaster Forum in New York



United Nations aid and development chiefs, government officials, and business leaders today pledged to expand cooperation in preparing for and responding to crises through new networks engaging the private sector.

We cannot afford not to involve the private sector in humanitarian response, UN Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator Achim Steiner said. Some 43 percent of people now live in areas especially vulnerable to natural and man-made disasters and crises or in areas of conflict, and by 2030 that number is expected to climb to a staggering 62 percent.

Economic losses from natural disasters alone stand at US\$314 billion annually. These challenges pose major risks to the private sector, and small and medium-sized companies are especially vulnerable, he said.

Resulting risks to the world's poorest people are high: Micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises account for 60-70 percent of all jobs globally and are the main income providers for people earning less than US\$10 per day.

Over recent years, global humanitarian needs have reached record highs, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock said. Collectively, needs are outpacing the ability of the international humanitarian system to respond. This has shifted how we need to do business, and underscored the need for new and strong partnerships with the private sector.

To meet this need, UNDP and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) launched the Connecting Business initiative (CBI) at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, after broad consultations found businesses wanted to play a more strategic role in crisis preparedness, response, and recovery.

In its first year, CBi supported private sector-led networks in 13 locations: Côte d'Ivoire, Fiji, Haiti, Kenya/East Africa, Madagascar, Mexico, Myanmar, Nigeria, the Pacific, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and Vanuatu. Eight of those networks mobilized in response to emergencies in the last year, and CBi plans to expand to 40 countries by 2020.

CBi partners gathered Tuesday alongside the UN General Assembly to discuss "Collective Private Sector Action for Disaster Risk Reduction, Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery."

Supporting a more systematic and sustainable engagement of the local private sector in disaster risk reduction and humanitarian aid is a step in the right direction, EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos Stylianides said. It can make an important contribution to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian system.

The United Nations Global Compact will now also join the group of core supporters of CBi to further create and leverage synergies through our networks and programs—like the Business for Humanitarian Action and Peace platform and the Global Compact Local Networks, UN Global Compact Executive Director and CEO Lise Kingo said.

The local private sector is often the first responder out there, distributing food, water and other necessary goods to the communities, and they can at the same time provide valuable information on where critical gaps exist, Morika Hunter, Chair of the Fiji Business Disaster Resilience Council, said.

Even though the initiative is still young, there is tremendous momentum, and CBi is generating significant interest from countries all over the world. It is exciting to see how the networks can learn from, help, and support each other. There is a lot we can do together, Butch Meily, President of the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation, said.