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International Recovery Forum 2019

~Attaining the Build Back Better Dividend~

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Introduction

The International Recovery Forum 2019 focused on approaches to realize the benefits of building back better in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction, and to ensure that everyone is included, so that no one is left behind. Building back better has been embraced by the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 as one of four key priorities for action. Building back better offers a critical opportunity to realize potentially wide-ranging benefits in recovery, including reduction of future losses, improvements in standards, practices, and technologies, stimulus for economic activity, and progress in other dimensions of development, to name a few. Yet, critical questions remain for decision makers, including how these benefits can be realized, how resources should be allocated, who should benefit, and how to ensure no one is left behind.

The International Recovery Forum 2019, “**Attaining the Build Back Better Dividend**”, convened distinguished speakers from governments, the private sector, academia, and international and civil society organizations to share their insights and experiences and to deliberate on these key questions. **Mr. Josef Leitmann**, Chair of the IRP Steering Committee and Lead DRM Specialist at the World Bank, opened the Forum, followed by welcome remarks from **Mr. Taku Kodaira**, Deputy Director-General for Disaster Management in the Cabinet Office of the Government of Japan, and **Mr. Kazuo Kanazawa**, Vice Governor of Hyogo Prefecture. The speakers affirmed the significance of hosting this Forum in the context of the 24th memorial of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, as an opportunity to build on the wealth of knowledge and experience that has accumulated in the time since this earthquake, and this community’s efforts to build back better. The Government of Japan’s efforts to build back better, particularly through a recent series of disasters, have been informed in part by learning from Kobe’s recovery experience. It was further noted that the Forum is a part of

a larger global discussion on building back better that continues through the forthcoming World Reconstruction Conference 4 and Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, both to take in May of this year, in Geneva, Switzerland.

Themes and Format of the Forum

The Forum was designed to address the conference objectives through the following themes:

- Strategies to Realize the Build Back Better Dividend
- Ensuring an Inclusive Dividend in Recovery

The main substantive sessions opened with a **keynote session** featuring two presentations. **Ms. Rita Missal**, Policy Specialist with UNDP, contextualized the discussions ahead with global disaster data and trends, detailing the growing impact of disasters around the world, and the challenges for recovery presented by persistent exclusion and inequalities. **Mr. Haruo Hayashi**, President of the National Research Institute for Earth Science and Disaster Resilience, set the stage for the Forum with a **keynote presentation**, presenting a framework for building back better developed for the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake and the evidence of its results. Based on lessons learned from a multitude of disasters that have struck Japan, the plan was the first in Japan to frame recovery in terms of three goals: physical recovery, economic recovery, and life recovery. It has become clear that these three goals are interdependent, and further rely on local empowerment and revitalization of communities and economies.

The first theme was addressed through a **panel discussion** moderated by **Mr. Leitmann**. The session included an opening presentation from **Mr. Leitmann** on the benefits of building back stronger, faster, and more inclusively. Panelists included **Ms. Sandra Nedeljkovic**, Deputy Director of the Public Investment Management



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Office for the Government of Serbia; **Mr. Miki Yoshida**, Deputy General Manager of Urban Solutions Development, Social Innovation Business Division at Hitachi, Ltd; **Ms. Setsuko Saya**, Director of the International Cooperation Division, Cabinet Office of the Government of Japan; **Mr. Shankar Gopalan Nair**, Chief Executive Officer of Habitat Technology, India; and **Mr. Nobuyuki Kurita**, Chairperson of Japan Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster.

The panel tapped into the collective wisdom and experiences of leaders from national governments, the private sector, and civil society. It delved into the ways in which countries and communities have learned from recovery experiences to develop new policy and institutional solutions, technological and social innovations, and culturally appropriate approaches to maximize the benefits of building back better.

The second theme was taken up by a **panel discussion** moderated by **Mr. Arghya Sinha Roy**, Senior Disaster Risk Management Specialist at the Asian Development Bank. The panel was composed of **Mr. Gombojav Ariunbuyan**, First Deputy Chief of the National Emergency Management Agency for the Government of Mongolia; **Ms. Sandra Schilen**, Executive Director of the Huairou Commission; **Mr. Suprayoga Hadi**, Primary Planner in the National Development Planning Ministry of the Government of Indonesia; **Mr. Shigeo Tatsuki**, Professor at Doshisha University; and **Ms. Kumiko Fujiwara**, Executive Director and Peer Counselor with Kobe Be Suketto.

The panel discussed the importance of inclusion to leave no one behind, and as a key enabler of a resilient recovery for everyone. Reflecting on recent experiences and research, the panel agreed that inclusion must start long before disasters occur, as institutionalizing inclusive processes and policies takes time to develop and take root. The panel argued for people-centered, and seamless approaches, so that people do not fall through the cracks created sectoral silos.

Although inclusion and build back better strategies were addressed in separate panels, it was clear throughout the Forum that inclusion is an essential part of any strategy to build back better in order to achieve the best outcomes for recovering communities. The discussions touched on a broad range of experiences and lessons, from which five key themes emerged.

Five key themes to Attain the build back better dividend



Build Forward Better. The notion of “building forward better”, which was championed in the IRP Forum last year, proposes that countries and communities should implement build back better measures now, and not wait for disasters to strike. This year’s Forum panelists affirmed that notion from the perspective of inclusion. Building forward better for inclusive recovery means addressing exclusion, preexisting inequities, and underlying vulnerabilities before disaster strikes. Research presented at the Forum indicated that pre-disaster disadvantages affect how people recover from the disasters, the time it takes to recover, and may also magnify these vulnerabilities. Addressing underlying vulnerabilities and social disadvantages during normal times is a form of pre-disaster mitigation, boosts resilience, and improves recovery outcomes.

Continuity planning is essential for both business and public services. One of the lessons gleaned from the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake experience was the disruption to local businesses not only slowed the economic and life stages of recovery, but also in the longer term, many of these business and industries never recovered. This experience and those since have prompted the Government of Japan to enact policies that require businesses to conduct business continuity planning. The Forum also shared an example of innovative continuity measures in a pilot smart city, where energy systems are designed to route stored energy to keep businesses and critical public functions running in the case of a disaster. It was also noted that social service continuity planning is also absolutely essential. In the absence of social service continuity plans, those who are supported by social services and care providers can fall through the cracks between systems, slowing their life recovery or worse.

Prepare for inclusive recovery. Forum panelists urged that inclusion must start long before disaster strikes. Building back better inclusively depends on institutionalizing inclusion – developing mechanisms, systems, financing and other institutional infrastructure that engenders inclusion. It depends on building relationships, developing stakeholder capacities, buy-in, and trust with communities, civil society, and other stakeholders. It also takes time. It was noted that efforts to build inclusive processes in Indonesia have been ongoing for more than 15 years.

Engender Cooperation and Coordination. When disasters strike, local and national governments, civil society, the international community and more mobilize to support response and recovery. Experience indicates that with a multitude of organizations seeking to support impacted communities to recover and build back better, cooperation and coordination are essential, but in the chaos of a post-disaster environment, it is a much more challenging feat. There must also be mechanisms to share information about needs, activities, financing, and more. In the absence of such mechanisms and the capacities to cooperate, coordination between national governments and local governments may be ad hoc, and efforts by non-governmental actors can be fragmented and inefficient, undermining efforts to build back better.

Build back better through people-centered, inclusive recovery. People-centered approaches to disaster recovery adopt the needs and perspectives of those who have been impacted by disasters. Panelists and participants both underscored the need for culturally-appropriate recovery policies and solutions. Engaging all stakeholders in recovery planning and decision-making enables the development of acceptable solutions for impacted communities that meets standards for disaster resilience. Panelists noted that building back better requires recovery to be seamless. They emphasized that people do not live their lives in the policy silos societies create – their gender, poverty, disabilities and capabilities are interrelated and intersect. Moreover, panelists discussed a recent case from Japan, in which disconnected social services and disaster systems created gaps in planning and service delivery when disaster struck. Recovery that focuses on people can meet people’s needs by not defining them by their individual identifying characteristics.

Closing

In the closing session, **Ms. Shoko Arakaki**, Chief of Branch for Partnerships, Inter-governmental process and Inter-agency Cooperation at UNISDR, reflected on the rich discussions of the day with several key points. She encouraged the participants to breakdown silos, wherever they occur, including data silos to ensure that no one is invisible. She encouraged attendees to reach out to the unconvinced and those who disagree in order to truly develop a whole-of-society approach to inclusion. **Ms. Setsuko Saya**, co-Chair of the IRP Steering Committee, closed the Forum, thanking the 168 participants for their active participation and support for the Forum.