

**Keynote Speech of Senator Loren Legarda
Launching of the UP Resilience Institute
20 June 2017 | Bahay ng Alumni, Diliman, Quezon City**

(Standard Greetings)

Throughout history, the complexity of development problems has been widely examined for insights into better approaches and solutions. Yet, the problems have persisted and the tasks for well-intentioned development leaders have become even more daunting.

Our world is wrought with danger. Climate change has intensified natural hazards, and disaster risks have been compounded by other human-induced factors such as

poverty, unplanned urbanization, ecosystems loss and weak governance.

A 2015 report by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) showed that between 1995 and 2015, “90% of major disasters have been caused by 6,457 recorded floods, storms, heat waves, droughts and other weather-related events. The five countries hit by the highest number of disasters are the United States (472), China (441), India (288), the Philippines (274), and Indonesia, (163).”¹

In that 20-year period, 606,000 lives were lost and 4.1 billion people injured, left homeless or in need of

¹ The Human Cost of Weather Related Disasters, UNISDR, 2015

emergency assistance as a result of weather-related disasters.²

Last year alone, disasters displaced 22 million people all over the world. According to the World Bank, 26 million people are thrown into poverty every year because of disasters, which cost the global economy US\$ 520 billion annually.³

In the coming years, the scenario could be worse.

The United Nations Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 points to growing global

² Ibid.

³ Data is Key to Disaster Prevention, Robert Glasser, UNISDR, 2017
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/594045bde4b0d99b4c920f59>

inequality, increasing hazard exposure, rapid urbanization, and the overconsumption of energy and natural capital as major factors that would “drive risk to dangerous and unpredictable levels.”⁴

At the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction held in Cancun, Mexico last month, nations reaffirmed their commitment to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and agreed to establish baseline data against which to measure progress in reducing disaster losses. By 2020, all countries should systematically account for disaster losses and have strategies in place to reduce it.

⁴ Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015

The UNISDR stresses that data is key to disaster prevention as it helps improve our understanding of disaster risk and how underlying factors drive up losses. Having data baselines in place will help guide national and local strategies for reducing disaster risk.

Among the strategies agreed in Cancun⁵:

- Conduct of disaster risk assessment of existing critical infrastructure by 2019;**
- Invest in collection of data and information on disaster risk and losses, taking into account the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples and**

⁵ Leaders' Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction, The Cancun High-Level Communiqué – 24 May 2017

http://www.preventionweb.net/files/53439_thecancunhighlevelcommuniquof24may2.pdf

addressing intensive and extensive risk, underlying risk drivers, and ensuring that they are tailored to local contexts;

- Strengthen normative and regulatory frameworks at all levels for disaster risk reduction, improved land use, building codes, enforcement and accountability as well as make resilience affordable, reduce the economic incentive for vulnerable development, foster private and public partnerships, allocate budget for disaster risk reduction and make resilient investment gainful;**
- Make disaster risk assessments a prerequisite for infrastructure and housing investments;**

- **Consider the risk of loss in infrastructure and housing and its consequences in the development of economic strategies and budgets.**

In all of these, science is crucial. The best strategies for disaster risk reduction are possible only with the guidance of science.

Especially for the Philippines, an archipelagic country with one of the longest coastlines in the world, we need probabilistic maps and impact-based forecasts and risk-informed warnings through multi-hazard early warning systems.

We need science in strengthening building codes and making risk-sensitive land use plans that are linked into yearly investment plans of governments. Hazard maps can provide a good foundation for the work of our planners and builders.

We need science in capacitating the private sector, especially the micro, small and medium enterprises, as we urge and support them in creating business continuity plans that reflect corporate strategy on how to swiftly spring back to operations after each disaster.

We need science in providing the depth and breadth of information that the public needs to make decisions and take early action.

The role of the UP Resilience Institute is crucial here. I envision this to be a center for topnotch research on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Not only will it be a primary source of climate information, it will also disseminate information and essential tools for the public, especially the local government units (LGUs).

The Project NOAH or Nationwide Operational Assessment of Hazards has been instrumental in improving disaster preparedness in the country. It has been very helpful particularly in providing accurate information and timely warnings to our agencies and

communities. I am glad that it will be integrated within the UP Resilience Institute.

Fundamentally, building resilience requires a risk-informed population. Everyone can help the government sustain our country's socio-economic gains, make a difference in poverty reduction and eventually ensure the achievement of sustainable development goals when perennial disaster losses are substantially reduced.

There will be many more typhoons, earthquakes and other natural hazards that will come our way. The challenge at hand is to do more and to do better in prevention and risk reduction, to build back better following disasters, and build better from the start.

I wish to end by reiterating our roles as builders, not just of communities of today, but communities of the future.

Let us build a safer, more resilient and sustainable world for all.

Thank you.