

# **BREXIT: A Setback to Global Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)**

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A few days ago, we saw a monumental shift in global politics. Britain, in a people's referendum, voted to leave the European Union (E.U.), with 51.89% in favor and 48.11% against. The ballot results were out within a day. Overnight, the landscape of Europe changed – economy, politics and culture. Media is out and about with all the leading networks joining the fray in London. Social media, no less, is frantic. People are posting and expressing dismay, by the minute, about the outcome. Some are scared.

Filipinos, interestingly, are rabid. Check out the Internet today and you will see a lot of them loathing on an occurrence 36,000 miles away. Are we being global, or just loud? In any case, this merits an investigation – a mini-thesis – in the impact of BREXIT on multilateral or regional cooperation, particularly in the area of Disaster Risk Preparedness (DRR). But before we go further, the average person has to be informed. Let us go to the basics.

## **What is Brexit?**

Brexit is a word – termed by the media – that has been used as a shorthand way of saying the United Kingdom (UK) leaving the European Union (EU). It merges the words Britain and exit to get Brexit, in a same way as a Greek exit from the EU was dubbed Grexit in the past few years.

It is the idea that the British people may vote to leave the European Union, through a people's referendum. There are several strong commercial reasons to not do so, but the British citizens do not like all the social bits that go along with staying.

## **What is the European Union?**

The European Union – otherwise known as the EU – is an economic and political partnership involving 28 European states. It was created after World War II to foster and strengthen economic cooperation. It supports the general idea that countries which trade together are more likely to avoid going to war against each other.

The EU has since grown to become a single market – allowing goods and people to freely move across borders, essentially as if the member states were one country. It has the following features: its own currency called the Euro which is used by 19 of the member States, its own parliament, and it now sets rules in a wide range of areas – including on the environment, transport, consumer rights, immigration and even things such as mobile phone charges.

## **Why leave the EU?**

“Leave” proponents believe Britain is being held back by the EU, which they say imposes too many rules on business and government. Likewise, they say EU charges billions of pounds (UK's currency) a year in membership fees for little in return. They also want Britain to take back full control of its borders and reduce the number of people coming here to live and/or work.

One of the main objectives of EU membership is the concept of free movement, which means an EU citizen does not need to secure a visa, nor an employment permit, to go and live in another EU state. The Leave campaign also objects to the idea of an “ever closer union” and what they see as moves towards the creation of a “United States of Europe”.

Moreover, they argue that the UK has always had an arm’s-length relationship with the EU. For instance, most of the EU states use a common currency, the Euro. British citizens declined.

There are two primary things Leave proponents are increasingly developing an allergy to. First, they are concerned about money the UK gives the EU. Team Leave thinks \$16.3 billion – the amount UK paid in 2014 – is way too high a membership fee to be a part of any club. It could go toward other areas such as medical insurance for all, bigger retirement benefits, or higher housing subsidy. Second, they are anxious on the EU rules and regulations. Earlier this year, Prime Minister David Cameron was able to seek a special status that exempts the UK from a lot of these rules. However, some folks don’t think it is enough.

Lastly, EU citizens can live and work in any EU country, and guess where most of them flock to? A whole 13% of the UK’s population are people from other countries. Some British citizens feel higher immigration puts a strain on healthcare and education, keeps wages low and puts local workers out of a job. They are also freaking out about the way the Syrian migrant crisis is playing out in other parts of Europe. They believe that Brexit will let the UK decide on its own – without having to conform to the rules of the EU – how to control its borders.

### **How does it affect other countries?**

Counties in Europe have the most to lose – on so many fronts. A little less than 50% of the UK’s exports go to the European Union. A little over 50% of its imports come from the rest of the EU. Once UK finally leaves, everything will be up for a renegotiation. In terms of diplomacy, whenever Europe does something beneficial, or for the greater good of its member States, UK has always been in the driver’s seat. Hence, the EU could lose a heavyweight.

In addition, the only other State that spends more on military, other than the United States of America, is the United Kingdom. And the latter is known for not being shy about flaunting its military and naval might. Without the latter, a post-Brexit EU will be a less powerful player in the world stage. That is not a good thing.

### **Should the Philippines care?**

Yes, it should. The UK economy is the fifth biggest in the world. Think of the effect it will have on the world’s markets. Consider also the threatening scenarios that would arise as<sup>1</sup> predicted by Remain proponents. Even if everything does not materialize, the economic and political uncertainty is enough to wreak havoc.<sup>2</sup>

### **What are impact areas?**

#### ***A. Housing***

British property analysts predict that Brexit will lead to a major slowdown in property

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<sup>1</sup> Fall of the pound currency, housing market bubble, financial recession, and so forth.

<sup>2</sup> Markets love stability. And unstable markets means potential bad news for a country’s economy.

price growth, or worse. Winkworth, a British real estate agency, says any fall in immigration numbers caused by Brexit would put downward pressure on house prices.

This is bad news for property investors, who have probably poured in a lot of capital from domestic and abroad. On the other hand, for property buyers this is a welcome change. Affordability of housing in the UK is a major concern for residents and immigrants, given that the country has one of the world's highest property prices.

Most importantly, without the EU immigrants who comprise 13% of UK's population, who would fill up their houses? Or worse, the existing properties on sale?

## **B. Financial markets**

As reported in Bloomberg, European stocks tumbled by Monday's close, as the fallout from Britain's decision to leave the European Union (EU) continues, sending the British pound to a 31-year low.

The pan-European stock market, STOXX 600, fell 4.1 percent provisionally by the close, with sharp losses seen in U.S. trade not helping to alleviate the pain. All European sectors posted solid losses, with banks, travel and financial services all closing off 7.5 percent or more.

CNBC, on the other hand, reports that a number of banks downgraded U.K. stocks and warned of the sectors most vulnerable to the effects of a Brexit. Citigroup says banks are one of the most exposed sectors to Brexit, particularly the U.K.'s domestic lenders. But Citigroup adds that European investment banks are also at risk. In a nutshell, every one is exposed to risk.

Be that as it may, the real impact was felt by U.K.'s mid-cap corporations which are most dependent on the domestic market. The FTSE 250 Index plummeted 7.2 percent, the most since 1987 and twice as much as the FTSE 100 – the market for large-cap companies. Veronika Pechlaner, who helps oversee \$10 billion at Ashburton Investments, says the largecap index is not really a good indicator for the U.K. domestic economy, as its many exporters are aided by the weaker sterling. British banks and homebuilders are far more exposed to the uncertainty surrounding the economic impact of an exit.

Perhaps the person to listen to is George Soros. He is the billionaire hedge fund manager who made a bet against British banks in 1992, and netted a \$1 billion profit.

With investors facing months of uncertainty following the Brexit vote, and the consequent turmoil in political leadership brought by Prime Minister Davide Cameron's resignation, the billionaire had this to say:

Britain eventually may or may not be relatively better off than other countries by leaving the EU, but its economy and people stand to suffer significantly in the short to medium term. Financial markets are likely to remain in turmoil as the long, complicated process of political and economic divorce from the EU is negotiated.

### *C. Labor*

With free movement of labor implemented by the European Union (EU), the British government had no choice but to focus on non-EU citizens to reduce immigration numbers, in order to heighten restrictions on who can enter the country.

Consequently, jobs are often advertised only for people who already have the right to work in the UK, which usually means British and other EU citizens, or those with family ties to the country. This has become common practice since 2004 when free movement of labor was introduced.

At the moment, the balance of EU and non-EU immigrants in the country is near 50-50, even though it is more difficult for non-EU citizens to immigrate to Europe. This is a sign that interest in immigration from outside the EU is significant, so if the incentive to hire EU citizens is taken away from employers, UK may start to see more Africans, Americans and Asians filling vacant jobs.

### *E. Immigration*

Disenchantment with the European Union (EU) has steadily increased in the UK because membership has become synonymous in many voters' minds with uncontrolled immigration.

Figures provide that the net migration to the UK - the number of people who came here after subtracting the number who left - rose to 333,000 in 2016. That was the second highest figure on record since the UK became part of European Union (EU). Important to note is 184,000 of them came from the EU member States. Brexit leader Boris Johnson said during the campaign the only way to bring the numbers down is to leave the EU.

British citizens are also blaming the immigrants for putting the National Health Service (NHS) and education services under pressure. However, it is worth noting that EU immigrants are net contributors to public ordinances. Hence, they ought not to be blamed for under-funded public services of the government.

Moreover, another big factor is the diminishing social status of the white working class. In recent years, there has been a marked improvement in average educational attainment in the UK, but this improvement has largely passed by white working class families. This white working class group is now easily the worst educated in the UK, as well as the most likely to be in low-paid work and to be competing for scarce supplies of social housing. In addition, the off spring of white working class parents are much less likely to go to university than the off spring of immigrant parents.

### *F. Environment*

EU membership has had a profound impact on UK environmental policy. In the 1970s and 80s, the UK earned the unattractive reputation for being the 'Dirty Man of Europe'; it had the highest sulphur dioxide emissions in the EU and its seas were akin to open sewers as British people pumped human effluent into them as part of the 'dilute and disperse' approach to pollution control.

Today many of the most important UK environmental policies and priorities are those

that have emerged via the European Union. The ‘Europeanisation’ of UK environmental policy has seen the following effects:

1. a re-organisation of the machinery of government and,
2. the introduction of new regulatory agencies such as the national rivers authority.
3. most importantly, the adoption of strict emissions limits with a clear judicial process to support the implementation and enforcement of policy.

Among the many EU directives that have helped the UK are the following:

1. EU bathing water directive which effectively created sewage treatments and lessened the emission of nitrates.
2. Quality and cleanliness of beaches, which increased an influx of tourists
3. Air quality framework, which potently lowered carbon dioxide emissions in London
4. Human rights on environmental law, which gave British and EU citizens a judicial process to lean on.

Furthermore, the EU also provides policies to protect UK wildlife under the Natura 2000, habitats and birds directives which currently oblige the government to provide protected wildlife zones.

Hence, the UK’s most important environmental policies that keep popular tourist destinations clean and attractive, maintain our air and water quality standards and provide business opportunities for UK industries, come from Brussels.

Without the external pressure and legal avenues afforded by EU membership, it is unlikely that British policy-makers would make the effort necessary to secure citizens’ health. This is shown by the British government’s well-known reluctance to address air quality in urban centres on grounds of cost and expenses.

Perhaps most importantly, given the transboundary nature of environmental problems, it makes sense to partake in European regional policy-making – something which have benefitted them all along.

From an environmental perspective, the frequent attempts by Conservative UK ministers – the proponents of the Leave campaign – to weaken progressive environmental policy at the European level, only suggests the weakening of environmental policy is inevitable.

**What are we going to focus on?**

### ***G. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)***

The 2009 UNISDR terminology defines DRR as the concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyse and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness for adverse events.

Disaster risk reduction cuts across different aspects and sectors of development. There are 25 targets related to disaster risk reduction in 10 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) – a UN initiative – firmly establishing the role of disaster risk reduction as a core development strategy.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes and reaffirms the urgent need to reduce the risk of disasters. There are several ways that disaster risk reduction is recognized and advanced in document, including direct references to the outcomes of the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Sendai Framework.

But what is sustainable development to begin with?

It is optimal development with minimal destruction. It is often equated with “development without destruction.” In short, it is the wise use of the environment. By wise use is meant sustainable utilization for the benefit of mankind in a way compatible with the maintenance of the natural elements of the ecosystem. It is, in other words, a forward-looking development.

DRR is a critical task; it is at the core of global sustainable development efforts

Scientific research and practitioner experience have revealed that disasters, development and poverty are intimately linked. Destruction of assets and livelihoods in disasters set back hard-won development gains and worsen poverty, often for extended periods of years. Progress in ending extreme poverty may be reversed in the face of a disaster event and poverty re-trenched.

Governments increasingly recognise that the reduction of disaster risks is a foundation for successful sustainable development, and that disaster risk is a crosscutting issue requiring action across multiple sectors.

Moreover, linking it to climate change, it is well accepted that disaster risk reduction measures will play an important role in responding to the projected increases in weather- and climate-related hazards including sea-level rise. Good management of today’s existing risks is clearly the starting point for facing tomorrow’s changed risks, whether from climate change, globalization or development. These three policy arenas share interests in monitoring changing risks, reducing exposure and vulnerability and advancing the transformation to resilience and sustainability.

The escalation of economic losses from earthquakes and weather-related disasters is a serious setback for many developing countries, impacting negatively on their future development and taking money away from areas such as health and education.

The concept of environmental unity states that “everything is connected to everything else”. It encourages a comprehensive inter-disciplinary approach. And it includes disaster risk reduction.

Ambassador Amado S. Tolentino writes:

If people involved in environmental protection were to approach their work with greater awareness of the unity of and state of nature, we could work much more effectively toward harmony with nature. At a more practical level, the discussion offers environmental law as a foundation for sustainable development.

Sustainable development has gone a long way from a mere concept into a principle with normative value. As changes are made through legislation, sustainable development can help define the path towards increasing preservation of the dignity and of the dignity of humanity within it.

### **EU's Disaster Risk Reduction**

The EU strongly supports the Sendai Framework's extension of the traditional focus on natural hazards to include man-made hazards and associated environmental, technological and biological hazards, which brings it in line with progress made at European level in recent years.

At present, EU's policy on DRR is as follows:

The EU's commitment to Disaster Risk Reduction can be found in two key policy documents: the European Consensus on Development (2005) and the Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (2007). The EU Commission has developed a comprehensive and integrated approach on disaster risk reduction, both within the EU and in developing countries.

The EU Strategy supports disaster risk reduction through development cooperation and through humanitarian aid. It promotes an integrated approach to disaster management with prevention, mitigation and preparedness as equal priorities to response.

Launched in 1996, the Disaster Preparedness ECHO programme (DIPECHO) is the core element of ECHO's DRR global efforts, in which it has thus far invested €325 million.

The key goal of the programme is to increase communities' resilience and reduce their vulnerability. DIPECHO is a people-oriented programme, helping communities at risk of disasters to better prepare themselves by undertaking training, establishing or improving local early warning systems and contingency planning. It also encourages citizens, civil society groups and local, regional and national authorities to work more effectively together

Integrating disaster risk reduction interventions into relief operations is another crucial element of preparedness. Given the possibility of reoccurring crises in the same region, ECHO encourages the inclusion of disaster preparedness actions in aid responses.

From an initial focus on piloting and replicating a community-based disaster risk management approach, DG ECHO has developed a more comprehensive people-centred approach, including engaging with institutions at all levels.

### **EU's Disaster Management**

The Union Civil Protection Mechanism – the main EU instrument for disaster risk management – addresses prevention, preparedness for, and response to, natural and manmade hazards as equal priorities. In our activities as a main humanitarian donor, resiliencebuilding and disaster risk reduction have also become central components of our decisionmaking and funding allocations.

The EU has supported a shift from a traditional approach to disaster management to a new and more comprehensive focus on disaster risk management. At the heart of this new

framework is the aim to prevent the creation of new risk and to reduce existing levels of disaster risk.

### **What's the EU Civil Protection Mechanism?**

In 2001, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism was established, fostering cooperation among national civil protection authorities across Europe. The Mechanism currently includes all 28 EU Member States in addition to Iceland, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey.

The Mechanism was set up to enable coordinated assistance from the participating states to victims of natural and man-made disasters in Europe and elsewhere.

#### ***Operational centre***

The operational hub of the Mechanism is the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) which monitors emergencies around the globe 24/7, and coordinates the response of the participating countries in case of a crisis. Thanks to the participating states' pre-positioned and self-sufficient civil protection modules, civil protection teams are ready to intervene at short notice both within and outside the EU. They undertake specialised tasks such as search and rescue, aerial forest fire fighting, advanced medical posts and more.

#### ***Prevention and preparedness***

The Mechanism helps in marine pollution emergencies, where it works closely with the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA). When the crisis occurs in developing countries, civil protection assistance typically goes hand in hand with EU humanitarian aid.

The Mechanism also provides participating countries with the opportunity to train their civil protection teams. By exchanging best practices and learning, teams increase their ability and effectiveness in responding to disasters. Additionally, the Mechanism provides emergency communications and monitoring tools, overseen by the ERCC through the Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS), a web-based alert and notification application enabling real time exchange of information between participating states and the ERCC.

Finally, the European Commission supports and complements the prevention and preparedness efforts of participating states, focusing on areas where a joint European approach is more effective than separate national actions. These include improving the quality of and accessibility to disaster information, encouraging research to promote disaster resilience, and reinforcing early warning tools.

#### ***ASEAN's Disaster Risk Reduction***

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, otherwise known as the ASEAN, is a political and economic organisation composed of ten southeast Asian nations. It was formed on August 8, 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Through the years, membership has expanded to include Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam. Among other things, it aims to accelerate economic growth, social progress, and sociocultural evolution among its member States, while protecting regional stability as well as providing a mechanism for member States to resolve conflicts peacefully.

On 24 December 2009, the ASEAN member States ratified a regional framework on disaster management and emergency response.

### **2009 Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER)**

The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) is a regional framework for cooperation, coordination, technical assistance, and resource mobilization in all aspects of disaster management.

AADMER provides the guidelines for effective mechanisms to achieve substantial reduction of disaster losses in lives and in the social, economic, and environmental assets, and to jointly respond to disaster emergencies through concerted national efforts and intensified regional and international cooperation.

Moreover, AADMER affirms ASEAN's commitment to the Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA) and is the first legally-binding HFA related instrument in the world. It serves as the foundation for disaster management initiatives in the region, including for the establishment of AHA Centre.

Article 2 of AADMER highlights its primary objective:

Article 2 Objective - The objective of this Agreement is to provide effective mechanisms to achieve substantial reduction of disaster losses in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of the Parties, and to jointly respond to disaster emergencies through concerted national efforts and intensified regional and international co-operation. This should be pursued in the overall context of sustainable development and in accordance with the provisions of this Agreement.

AADMER imposes on member States the following obligations:

Article 4 General Obligations:

In pursuing the objective of this Agreement, the Parties shall:

- a. co-operate in developing and implementing measures to reduce disaster losses including identification of disaster risk, development of monitoring, assessment and early warning systems, standby arrangements for disaster relief and emergency response, exchange of information and technology, and the provision of mutual assistance;
- b. immediately respond to a disaster occurring within their territory. When the said disaster is likely to cause possible impacts on other Member States, respond promptly to a request for relevant information sought by a Member State or States that are or may be affected by such disasters, with a view to minimising the consequences;
- c. promptly respond to a request for assistance from an affected Party; and
- d. take legislative, administrative and other measures as necessary to implement their obligations under this Agreement.

In June 2012, the ASEAN Secretariat organized the ASEAN Cross-Sectoral and MultiStakeholder Consultation Workshop – hoping to foster cross-sectoral cooperation and

partnership mechanisms. During the workshop, they identified more than 20 sectors in ASEAN that should be prioritized in the implementation AADMER's Work Programme. The ASEAN Secretariat further identified 15 related thematic areas, which are grouped into three clusters.

### **UN's Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy**

In the global stage, DRR is dealt with by the United Nations (UN), no less. UN's Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015) has stimulated the development of reporting and databases. A process of national self-reporting has been put in place to monitor progress against measures of national achievement on the priorities and tasks. Most of the measures address inputs and processes, rather than outcomes.

Post-2015, the United Nations developed a successor arrangement – the Sendai framework – in parallel with the former's Sustainable Development Goals. The framework on DRR runs from 2015 to 2030, and was adopted by member States at the Third UN World Conference in Sendai, Japan, on 18 March 2015. The new UN framework calls for stronger targets and upgraded accountability among member States.

### **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030)**

United Nation's Sendai Framework is a 15-year, voluntary, non-binding agreement which recognizes that the State has the primary role to reduce disaster risk but that responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders including local government, the private sector and other stakeholders. It aims for the following outcome:

The substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries.

The Sendai Framework is the successor instrument to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015: *Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters*. It is the outcome of stakeholder consultations initiated in March 2012 and inter-governmental negotiations held from July 2014 to March 2015, which were supported by the UNISDR upon the request of the UN General Assembly.

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) has been tasked to support the implementation, follow-up and review of the Sendai Framework.

To ramp up efforts toward global DRR, the Sendai Framework highlights the following global targets and priorities:

#### **The Seven Global Targets**

1. Substantially reduce global disaster mortality by 2030, aiming to lower average per 100,000 global mortality rate in the decade 2020-2030 compared to the period 2005-2015.
2. Substantially reduce the number of affected people globally by 2030, aiming to lower average global figure per 100,000 in the decade 2020 -2030 compared to the period 2005-2015.
3. Reduce direct disaster economic loss in relation to global gross domestic product

(GDP) by 2030.

4. Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, among them health and educational facilities, including through developing their resilience by 2030.
5. Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020.
6. Substantially enhance international cooperation to developing countries through adequate and sustainable support to complement their national actions for implementation of this Framework by 2030.
7. Substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to the people by 2030.

### **The Four Priorities for Action**

#### Priority 1. Understanding disaster risk

Disaster risk management should be based on an understanding of disaster risk in all its dimensions of vulnerability, capacity, exposure of persons and assets, hazard characteristics and the environment. Such knowledge can be used for risk assessment, prevention, mitigation, preparedness and response.

#### Priority 2. Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk

Disaster risk governance at the national, regional and global levels is very important for prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery, and rehabilitation. It fosters collaboration and partnership.

#### Priority 3. Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience

Public and private investment in disaster risk prevention and reduction through structural and non-structural measures are essential to enhance the economic, social, health and cultural resilience of persons, communities, countries and their assets, as well as the environment.

#### Priority 4. Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction

The growth of disaster risk means there is a need to strengthen disaster preparedness for response, take action in anticipation of events, and ensure capacities are in place for effective response and recovery at all levels. The recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phase is a critical opportunity to build back better, including through integrating disaster risk reduction into development measures.

### **Implementation for the Sendai Framework**

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction charts the global course over years 2015 until 2030. During the consultations and negotiations that led to its finalization, strong calls were made to develop practical guidance to support implementation, ensure engagement and ownership of action by all stakeholders, and strengthen accountability in disaster risk reduction.

Paragraph 48 (c) of the Sendai Framework imposes upon the UN office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) the primary responsibility to support the implementation, follow-up, and review of this framework through:

1. generating evidence-based and practical guidance for implementation in close collaboration with States,
2. mobilization of experts,
3. reinforcing a culture of prevention in relevant stakeholders.

With the looming Brexit, how will Britain address both regional or global DRR?

In spite of the 51.89% vote turnout in favor of leaving the European Union, UK remains to be a member State until it pulls the trigger. That trigger, specifically, is Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon which requires to be invoked by the UK — or any member State wishing to pull out of EU. In fact, the EU is powerless to force out a member State as only the latter has the power to defect. Hence the call of Prime Ministers of EU member States for an immediate Brexit, following the referendum, remain unheeded.

As of 30 June 2016, there are approximately 3.5 million British citizens who have signed in an online petition calling for a second referendum. Although there are no legal obstacles for one, political analysts believe the chances of Article 50 not being triggered are very slim.

But then again, who knows? Nothing is certain. There is always a margin of error.

Suppose the trigger is pulled and Brexit comes to pass, how would Britain come to grips with regional or global DRR?

Through the years, efforts have been made increase regional, if not global cooperation. Through it, the ASEAN was formed for the stability Southeast Asian nations. The EU was created to establish a politico-economic union. The United Nations was instituted to promote international cooperation. These organizations were instrumental in creating regional and global frameworks to address for instance, climate change, haze pollution, or other transboundary disasters which could not be solved unilaterally by a single State.

With Britain out of the European union, how would it handle Disaster Risk Reduction? Air Quality Frameworks? Bathing Water Directives? The aforementioned are all policy creations of the European Union. Yes, Brexit would give Britain the power to control its own borders, tighten immigration. With less immigrants, it would improve the labor market for UK natives and strengthen education and medical services, they argue. It would save Britain from the millions of euros in membership fees paid to the EU.

With Britain's looming exit from the EU, it would set the stage for other grumbling States to follow suit. Grexit, or Greece Exit — after years of teasing about defecting — is now a strong possibility. Sixty-nine percent of Swedes believe it is likely there would be further exits from the EU “post-Brexit,” with sixty-six percent of Danes and 57 percent of Norwegians feeling the same way. While the prospect of EU member States immediately following suit is not imminent, it would “certainly sow seeds of doubt,” according to Paolo Dardanelli, lecturer in comparative politics and director of the Center for Federal Studies at the University of Kent.

This fiasco is a setback to Britain, a disappointment to global cooperation, and a blow to DRR.

We live in a world where environmental disasters are solved not only within the confines of national boundaries. Britain alone cannot solve it; any unilateral action by a State is not enough.

Weak DRR results to increased transboundary disasters which in turn affects sustainable development

Amb. Amado S. Tolentino illustrates a good example of a regional response to environmental disasters:

It is interesting to compare Asean's response to the Haze issue with the threat posed by zoonotic diseases, e.g. SARS, avian flu, swine flu (H1N1) during the last 7 years which raised not only issues of human security but also challenged animal protection, the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems and the pursuit of sustainable development, i.e. sustainability of the chain of animal food production.

The threat of a pandemic drove Asean to act with prompt response with no less than 25 Asean soft law instruments. Possibly, Asean's response to zoonotic diseases was more successful as a result of the threat of pandemic not only in the region but also in many parts of the world.

## **Conclusion**

Over the last twenty years, the overwhelming majority (90%) of disasters have been caused by floods, storms, heatwaves and other weather-related events.

In total, 6,457 environment-related disasters were recorded by the UN. Over this period, environment-related disasters claimed 606,000 lives, an average of some 30,000 per annum, with an additional 4.1 billion people injured, left homeless or in need of emergency assistance.

Environmental disasters, as serious threats to sustainable development and human security more broadly, may be classified as beyond the scope of a State's internal affairs and needs to be subject to regional or global governance, despite sovereignty.

It can be argued that the inability to avert an environmental disaster is a greater loss of sovereign authority than cooperation in agreed programs to control harm and mitigate risks.

A greater loss of human lives, a greater cost of damaged communities.

## ***Global response***

The Sendai Framework calls for enhanced international cooperation for disaster risk reduction in both developed and developing countries, something which the European Union and the ASEAN has long endorsed and supported.

More importantly, it has an important role in the implementation and achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and vice versa. Both documents have the capacity to shape public and private sector efforts, and build partnerships to address the underlying drivers of risk and future levels of risk and resilience if implementation is concerted.

A key part of its success will be measured by progress in implementation of disaster risk reduction. The focus on implementation provides an opportunity to encourage increased political commitment and economic investment to reduce risks. It will also take development action that considers disaster resilience as critical to poverty reduction and key enabler of sustainable development.

Equally, resilience building is key. This concept is at the heart of UN's prior framework for DD – the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015). The Sendai Framework for DRR 2015-2030 recognizes this as a pillar for both DRR and sustainable development, and intensifies the call to arms.

As defined by the UNISDR, resilience is the ability of a system, community or society exposed to a hazard to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions.

The overwhelming majority (90%) of disasters being caused by environmental issues only underline the need for UN office of DRR, ASEAN's AADMER, EU's Union Civil Protection Mechanism, and all their other partners to heighten DRR efforts, and to promote international cooperation.

The world does not have time for defections and Brexits. Confrontations among States must be set aside. Differences between member States and regional or global institutions must be set aside. Only then could the pursuit of sustainable development, through multilateral cooperation and effective disaster risk reduction mechanisms, be enhanced.

Unless disaster risks are effectively managed, increasing disaster loss and impacts will continue to undermine efforts to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development.

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