



**PSI statement to the Preparatory Committee for the
Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction at their
Consultations with Major Groups on
17 November 2014
(United Nations, Geneva)**

I speak for millions of workers across the globe.

I want to especially focus on the roles and responsibilities of first responders – those workers who put themselves at direct risk, in the front line, to save people and property.

Some of these workers you know : Firefighters, police and civil protection, ambulance crew.

These are the most visible, and often the most vulnerable.

But we want to draw attention to : the full range of health and social services workers, as well as workers in public transport, teachers and education support staff

Also the people who clear rubble after the damage has been done, and restore electricity and water supply that are essential to all other recovery efforts.

And many others.

The majority of these workers are employed by local and national governments.

All of these workers put themselves at risk, often without the necessary protections.

We think that targets and goals should recognise this reality and should be very specific about the labour rights of emergency and disaster workers.

We should track the number of deaths and injuries suffered by disaster workers.

We should track the number of workers trained and equipped to do this emergency and recovery work.

More difficult will be to track the quality of their training and preparation, which can make an enormous difference in saving lives.

But all of these are essential if we want to make real progress.

Chair, our view of the zero draft is favourable, recognising the inherent complexity of the issue at hand.

However the absence of specific reference to our members in the text is a real omission which will make it more difficult to convince our members that states are serious about our contributions to this most serious area of work.

Need I remind states that labour conventions agreed by the member states in the ILO are binding?

This omission in the text can be solved easily and briefly by delegates.

First responders have a stake in how disasters play out – they *are* stakeholders.

Further, it is clear that first responders need solid public sector investments and management.

The time is past to put our hopes in private sector investment in this key area.

We must break the vicious grip of austerity and structural adjustment policies which block urgently needed investment in public infrastructure and services.

We also support specific emphasis on social protection as a set of policies which underpin resilience.

Our members, our families and our communities can't wait any longer.