

Speech by Prince Hussain Aga Khan at the Resilient Housing Challenge Geneva, Switzerland, 13 May 2019

Friends and colleagues from the United Nations,
The World Bank,
and various other international organisations and
NGOs,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today and see
the fantastic results of the Resilient Home Challenge.

At the Aga Khan Development Network we have
worked for decades to respond to innumerable
earthquakes, avalanches, floods, and landslides. The countries that fall in the Aga Khan Agency
for Habitat's remit have suffered 847 major disasters over the last 28 years, accounting for over
243,000 lives lost. As all of us know, these disasters often cause families to lose their most
valuable asset: their home. Time and again we have worked to put people in tents in the response
phase, then in shelters, to keep them warm and safe during winter. Each time we found that it
was very difficult to find affordable and practical solutions to the logical next step: to put them
in new homes so that they could resume their normal life.



As we all know, natural disasters are increasing in both frequency and severity because of
climate change. They have become more devastating than in the past. Both in mountainous and
coastal areas, effects are especially strong. While the coastal impact is well known, and gets
lots of publicity, as was the case with Cyclone Fani just ten days ago, the same is not true of
mountainous areas. Yet, the same hill a villager might have heard from his grandfather was the
site of a devastating avalanche or flood in the past, now seems to cause trouble every few years.
And glaciers that were there forever, now pose immediate threats of glacial lake outburst floods
that wipe away people's homes and livelihoods. The Aga Khan Agency for Habitat was created
specifically to find ways to deal with these increasing threats. Its mission is to find innovative
ways to address the threat of natural disaster and work to make communities resilient, building
on the decades of experience of various AKDN agencies.

It was therefore an easy decision for us to partner with the World Bank and others in support of
the Resilient Home Challenge. Creating contextual, affordable and easy-to-build home designs
is one of many important steps toward a more effective approach to disaster preparedness,
response and reconstruction.

I want to thank in particular my friend Saurabh Dani, who started the Challenge, as well as all
those who contributed innovative designs, including those we can see here today. I also want
to assure all of you that the AKDN, and in particular the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat is keen
to develop future partnerships to help us meet the challenge of keeping communities resilient
and as safe as possible from natural disasters.

Thank you very much.

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