

**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR THE INTERIOR OF THE
REPUBLIC OF GHANA, HON. MR. ALBERT KAN-DAPAAH (MP) TO
THE GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION
GENEVA, 5 - 7 JUNE, 2007**

Distinguished Ministers,

Distinguished Heads of Delegations and

Distinguished Participants,

Ghana is delighted that this Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction is now in place and we congratulate the ISDR for facilitating this First Session. We are also grateful and commend Switzerland for hosting this event. We believe we have a story to tell the international community and this Platform offers us a unique opportunity. To us in Ghana Disaster Risk constitutes a major development challenge just as it does to our neighbours in the West African sub-region.

Last month the Economic Commission of West African States sponsored a meeting of Ministers responsible for Disaster Risk Reduction in the sub-region in Cote D'Ivoire, Abidjan.

We were unanimous in the definition of the challenges that confront us which are that:

- (1) Disasters are increasing across sub-Saharan Africa including West Africa;
- (2) Specifically, Epidemic, Famine, Drought, Flood, Windstorm, Pest Infestation, Landslides which are linked to hydro-

meteorological hazards are the main causes of loss of life, property and environmental damages.

Mr. Chairman, we noted with much concern and regret that these disasters are the result of poverty, low development, unplanned human settlements, environmental degradation, urbanization and other related factors that increase the vulnerability of people, property and infrastructure.

Mr. Chairman, it was a source of great encouragement that the awareness of the developmental challenges posed by Disaster Risk is all over the sub-region.

It was even more encouraging that all countries in the sub-region subscribe to the Hyogo Framework for Action which comprehensively provide agreed framework of strategic goals and priorities for action.

We have embraced the Hyogo Framework for Action and further to Hyogo, Africa has organized the first Africa Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction Consultative Meeting and indeed we in the West African sub-region have issued a Policy Document for Disaster Risk Reduction which provides guiding principles for national actions to reduce the risk of disasters in our sub-region.

So, Mr. Chairman, as you can see, we have not been sleeping in West Africa. We have made some progress in Disaster Risk Reduction since Hyogo.

National Disaster Organizations have been established in virtually all our countries.

- 2) We have put in place the necessary national legislations**
- 3) We have developed and articulated Policy Statements as appropriate**
- 4) We have demonstrated appreciable political commitment**
- 5) And indeed the majority of countries in the sub-region have developed multi-stakeholder National Platforms for DRR**
- 6) In recent times we have been advised to mainstream DRR into our economic development policies, strategies and plans. This we are doing.**

It is a matter of regret however, that in spite of all that we have done, there is not a single country in the sub-region that is in a position to respond to any disaster. And what is alarming, no member country will have the capacity and capability to reduce Disaster Risks in the near future.

As we observed in our Abidjan Meeting, one major constraint facing the sub-region is translating the momentum gained into sustainable programmes and investments that tangibly reduce long term vulnerability.

Specifically, our Disaster Management Organizations face significant financing gaps and this severely impact on the extent to which DRR initiatives are implemented. Financing is a problem. Our countries have large populations but low tax revenues. Most of them have gross tax revenues of \$500 million dollars for their large population.

Mr. Chairman, whatever level of political commitment that exists and in spite of whatever priority you give to DRR in your Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategies, there can hardly be any significant contribution from national governments.

Mr. Chairman, I call on this Platform to give serious thought and attention to the predicament of the poor African nations and consider the establishment of a special financing mechanism for these countries.

If the world does not provide to prevent disasters, they will have to provide to rebuild communities destroyed by disasters. I dare say that it is cheaper and sensible to go for the first option.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for the opportunity.