

**Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction  
(Geneva, 5 June 2007)**

**Statement by Dr. B. Bhattacharjee,  
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Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I am thankful for the opportunity given to me for making this intervention at the Opening Session of the First Global Platform Meeting of the UNISDR.

India's developmental strategy has laid considerable emphasis on reducing the risks of disasters. We have developed a comprehensive food security system and an integrated poverty reduction strategy, which have reduced the adverse impacts of natural disasters. Devolution of power to the rural and urban local self-governing institutions, have empowered the local communities. India has a vibrant micro-credit movement, mostly run by self-help groups of women, which has enhanced the resilience of communities. We have been running various programmes like Drought Prone Area Programme, Desert Development Programme, Employment Guarantee Scheme, Water Shed Management etc. which have mitigated the adverse impacts of natural disasters.

During the last decade and half, India faced four mega disasters which have caused great loss of life and property. As a response we progressively developed a robust disaster management system in the country. There is now a complete paradigm shift in our approach from the post disaster relief and rehabilitation based reactive approach to the pre-disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness based proactive approach in a holistic manner. We have developed a legal and institutional mechanism with a very strong political commitment at the highest level for reducing the risks of disasters at all levels.

This paradigm shift in disaster management in India was ushered in, when **Government of India took a defining step by enacting the Disaster Management Act in December 2005.** **The Act is unique in providing the necessary institutional, financial and legal framework** headed by the leadership at the national and provincial levels. **For example, the Hon'ble Prime Minister is the Chairman of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)** – the apex body constituted to steer the entire disaster management activity in the country, and, the **state chief ministers themselves head the state disaster management authorities.**

We have developed early warning systems for all major natural hazards. This has been achieved by harnessing our strength in science and technology, in general, and information and communication technology, in particular, for disaster risk reduction and preparedness. We have mainstreamed risk reduction in our educational system and are implementing the largest community based disaster preparedness programme in the world. We have embarked upon an ambitious programme for training and capacity building across every sector at every level.

Broadly, India's approach to the challenges posed by disasters and important initiatives taken by our country are as follows:

- India has brought about a change in the approach to Disaster Management. The change is from a relief-centric approach to a holistic approach covering the entire cycle of disaster management encompassing prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, relief and rehabilitation.
- The approach aims at sustainable development by integrating disaster mitigation with development process. It proceeds from the firm conviction that sustainable development is not possible without addressing disaster concerns in the planning process. It is a multi-dimensional, multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach involving diverse scientific, engineering, social and financial processes.

- In line with the change in orientation, a National Disaster Management Framework has been drawn up. The National Roadmap, lays down a broad strategy, covers institutional mechanisms, mitigation/prevention measures, legal and policy framework, preparedness and response, early warning systems, human resource development, training and capacity building.
- In pursuance of the National Roadmap, the Disaster Management Act, 2005 has been enacted to facilitate effective steps for the mitigation of disasters, prepare for and coordinate emergency response to disasters and other related matters.
- The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has been established under the Chairmanship of Prime Minister as per provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005. The National Authority functions as an expert policy level body and has been entrusted with the responsibility to lay down the policies, plans and guidelines for disaster management. The legislation provides for constitution of Disaster Management Authorities at State and District level also.
- National Policy on Disaster Management in India has been submitted by NDMA and it has already issued the National Guidelines for Management of Earth Quake and Chemical (Industries) disasters. Preparation of National Guidelines for cyclones, floods, nuclear disasters are in the pipeline.
- As a part of the mitigation strategy, separate National Core Groups for earthquake, cyclone and landslide risk mitigation have been constituted to assist the Government in hazard specific zonation, risk assessment and mitigation planning, upgradation of early warning systems and putting in place an improved techno legal regime.
- For putting in place an improved techno-legal regime, model building bye laws, town and country planning legislation, zoning and development control regulations have been formulated.

- A community based Disaster Risk Management Programme (DRMP) is under implementation in 169 multi hazard prone districts in 17 States. The main components of the programme include putting in place sustainable initiatives with the involvement of local self-government institutions and communities, formulation of disaster management plans at all levels, constitution and sensitization of Disaster Management Committees and establishment and training of Disaster Management Teams (DMTs) at all levels. Training is being imparted to DMTs in search and rescue, first-aid, relief coordination, shelter management plans etc.
- The National Disaster Response Force consisting of about 10,000 personnel with state-of-the-art equipment for specialized response is being trained for emergency response.
- Specialist Incident Management Teams are being developed with Members of the Teams trained in different aspects of incident management – logistics, operations, planning, safety, media management etc.
- The concerned Ministries/Departments of the Central Government have drawn up Emergency Support Function Plans. States have also been advised to take similar steps.
- A web-enabled centralized data base has been operationalised. It is a nationwide electronic inventory of essential and specialist resources for disaster response including specialist equipment and manpower resources.
- An Early Warning System for tsunami and storm surges is being put in place.

- A National Emergency Communication Plan has been initiated for providing communication linkages with alternative back up among the National, State and District Emergency Operation Centres as also the Mobile Emergency Operation Centre to be set up at the disaster sites.
- A National Institute of Disaster Management has been set up as per the provisions of the Disaster Management Act to undertake capacity building. The Institute has been entrusted with the responsibility to develop training modules, undertake research and documentation, organize training programmes, formulate and implement a comprehensive human resource development plan at all levels of the stake-holders.
- A National programme for awareness generation has been initiated as a part of the overall disaster risk management strategy. Disaster Management has been introduced in the school curricula through the Central Board of Secondary Education. This is being taken up further through the respective School Boards of Education of different States.
- The Civil Defence set up in the country is being revamped to play a pivotal role in all facets of disaster management.
- Fire Services are proposed to be strengthened and upgraded to function as multi-hazard response units.

India has also taken a lead in promoting regional cooperation in disaster risk reduction in South Asia. The SAARC Disaster Management Centre is based in New Delhi.

During the Indian Ocean Tsunami, the Government of India extended assistance to neighbouring countries which sought our help. Similarly, in the case of other recent disasters in the region we have been quick to offer our material and human resources. India is prepared to play an active role in assisting the international community in this regard.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

India had played an important role in supporting the formulation of Hyogo Framework for Action and we remain firmly committed to its implementation. As reiterated by the UN General Assembly recently, while each State has the primary responsibility for its own sustainable development and for taking effective measures to reduce disaster risk, such efforts need to be supplemented by international cooperation and partnerships.

We welcome the holding of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction as a multi-stakeholder mechanism with an important advocacy role. It is as an ideal forum to share best practices and learn from each others experiences. We have no doubt that the outcome of the Global Platform will be a useful input into the deliberations of the UN General Assembly on the subject.

We are fully aware of the enormous complexities and the difficulties of the tasks ahead. We have to face these challenges through a planned strategy and concerted action. We would be looking forward to the deliberations in this Conference and extend all our efforts and cooperation in making it a success.

I thank you all, once again, for giving me a patient hearing.

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