

First Session on the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

Statement by

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Chairperson,

Honorable Ministers,

Excellencies, Ambassadors, and members of the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Risk Reduction,

Representatives on UN Agencies and Organizations,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I wish to convey to you warm greetings from the Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. On her behalf, I thank the UN/ISDR for inviting the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) to participate in this First Session on the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

We in the Philippines face daunting challenges of crafting policies and building synergies to reach and achieve the Priorities of Actions outlined in the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA). In our pursuit of this ten-year agenda, we are constrained by the constant occurrence of severe and recurrent disasters such as the devastating typhoons which hit the Philippines last year. Of necessity, the Philippines devoted considerable attention and measures to emergency relief and early recovery in areas severely affected by floods and landslides. Time and again these events dramatically jeopardize and disrupt the nationwide effort at paving a path towards disaster resilient communities. Compounding the disastrous impact of natural hazards was the occurrence of the MT Solar 1 oil spill incident in Guimaras last year. The economic and environmental damages and implications for progress and social-well-being of this

unprecedented disaster entail years of unrelenting concerted action on rehabilitation efforts.

These are strong reasons why we attach particular importance to addressing disaster risk as an integral part of strategies and programs for poverty reduction and sustainable development in the Philippines. It is in this regard and within the framework of stronger and effective regional cooperation on HFA that we have taken initiatives to embed disaster risk reduction strategies into land-use and physical planning, infrastructure works, and in the education system. Under the leadership of the NDCC, the Philippines is moving forward the institutionalization of National and Local Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction.

In an integrated manner, these initiatives propose a set of complementary actions to provide for advocacy and leadership in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development planning and program implementation. In this effort we are enthused by the valuable support of UN agencies and regional organizations. This First Session of the Global Platform on DRR further provides us not only encouragement but also endows inspiration to face the challenges and opportunities in achieving the commitments set by the HFA.

In that spirit, and in line with President Arroyo's firm contention and commitment on Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management, I wish to applaud the commendable work of the UN for providing leadership in the implementation of the priorities of HFA. The challenge is for us to collectively devise strong partnership arrangements to induce greater participation of the community, private sector, and civil society organizations. Recognizing and bringing them to the center stage of disaster risk reduction would infuse our efforts with energy, innovative ideas, and resources.

Excellencies, having disaster resilient communities is not unachievable. We can make it if we focus better and move faster to grasp opportunities.

We are most sincerely grateful for being part of this great global undertaking and we express our readiness to do our utmost to ensure that the Philippines contributes positively and substantially towards efforts on disaster risk reduction.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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