

**Address by Hon. Mahinda Amaraweera, Minister of Disaster Management of
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka at the Global Platform 2013
Geneva, Switzerland.**

Heads of States! Honourable Ministers! Distinguished Participants! Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is a pleasure and a privilege to address the Fourth Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, for the second time, as the Minister in charge of the subject in Sri Lanka. I wish to convey the warm wishes and congratulations of the H.E. President Mahinda Rajapakse and the people of Sri Lanka to the Global Platform.

Sri Lanka over the years has benefitted much by the knowledge sharing, networking, partnership approach of the Hyogo Framework for Action and other good practices promoted by the Global Platform. Thank you!

Since the Indian Ocean Tsunami of December 26, 2004, Sri Lanka made a steady progress in various aspects of Disaster Management. The “Road Map Towards Safer Sri Lanka 2005-2015” developed in 2005 in line with the Hyogo Framework and in consultation with a range of partners has provided the guidance for us.

Disaster Management requires the co-operation of a range of local and international entities. The National Platform or the National Disaster Management Coordinating Committee in Sri Lanka, since November 2007, meets monthly chaired by the Secretary of my Ministry. It has a membership of over 70 comprising representatives from Government, UN, International and National non-governmental organizations, media, private sector and Universities. We also have established a strong international network to support and share our work.

We are pleased to report that the 24/7 operational capacity allows us to evacuate coastal areas following a tsunami alert within an hour. It was not the case in December 2004 when we lost more than 30,000 people. Similarly the early warning and response capacity for floods and landslides have improved significantly. This year we are commissioning a national “Doppler Radar” system to further enhance early warnings. We are in the process of developing the National Emergency Operations Procedures to synchronize the responses by over 30 agencies covering 29 hazards.

The ending of the internal conflict in May 2009 also provided us with an opportunity and a challenge to mainstream Disaster Risk Reduction in planning and development. As rapid development itself could lead to more disasters we started identifying environment and disaster linkages and initiated a number of Environmental Assessments to promote the adoption of Disaster Management in development.

We strongly support “Eco-system based Disaster Risk Reduction.” As such we started incorporating Disaster Risk Reduction in District and Community Planning to ensure the long-term sustainability and resilience of socio-economic development. Guidelines for housing and road constructions with disaster resilient approaches have been completed and trainings at technical colleges and field level are ongoing.

Our strength to mainstream Disaster Risk Reduction was significantly improved with the release of nine national hazard profiles in December 2012 covering coastal erosion, drought, flood, landslide, lightening, sea level rise, storm surge, tropical cyclone and tsunami.

The “Resilient Cities” programme already developed disaster management plans for more than 15 cities. Since 2005 we marked the “National Safety Day” on December 26th targeting different themes and geographic regions. In 2012 we held the fourth “Annual Symposium on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation.”

“Education and Awareness among schools and communities” have being strengthened through “Supplementary books for grades 7 through 11” and “Watershed based learning and Risk Reduction.” The new “Master’s Degree in Disaster Management started in 2012 by the University of Colombo will help to build the capacity of disaster management professionals.

I am pleased to note that Sri Lanka is emerging as a model and an incubator for Disaster Risk Reduction. We already had two international workshops to share Sri Lanka hazard and risk assessment experience held in 2012 and 2013.

The Government investment in Disaster Risk Reduction is on the increase, every year. My Ministry is in the process of developing a new Comprehensive Disaster

Management Programme extending up to 2020. We hope to accommodate the new thinking emerging via the HFA 2, Rio+20 and important challenges like climate change in the new programme.

I am glad to be here and to network and learn global best practices in Disaster Risk Reduction and to share. Thank you very much!