

**Draft: 10 May 2013**  
*(Check against delivery)*



**GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION  
FOURTH SESSION, GENEVA, 19-23 MAY 2013**

**“INVEST TODAY FOR A SAFER TOMORROW: RESILIENT PEOPLE – RESILIENT PLANET”**

**SAARC SECRETARIAT STATEMENT  
SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION (SAARC)  
KATHMANDU, NEPAL**

**(TO BE DELIVERED ON BEHALF OF H.E. MR. AHMED SALEEM, SECRETARY GENERAL OF SAARC,  
BY MR. SINGYE DORJEE, DIRECTOR, SAARC SECRETARIAT)**

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation is happy to participate in the Fourth Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

### **SAARC Challenges and Commitment**

South Asia, prone to disastrous calamities, natural or otherwise, faces numerous challenges, primarily due to resource constraints. Despite the limitations, SAARC is determined and committed to strengthening regional cooperation in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in line with regional plans, frameworks and roadmaps, which are largely aligned to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA). At the same time, the support of the global society and stakeholders with necessary resources to supplement national and local government efforts in SAAARC Member States would be crucial.

### **Developments since May 2011:**

My presentation is an update on the progress in SAARC since the Third Session of the Global Platform. I highlight only in summary some of the important activities that have been implemented since Global Platform 2011.

SAARC has implemented numerous activities related to disaster risk reduction. This has enhanced cooperation within and outside SAARC region. The program activities have been, and would continue to be, targeted at building capacity, expertise and data. Such programs are necessary for advancing the goals of the theme set for the current (Fourth) session of the Global Platform - "Invest Today for a Safer Tomorrow: Resilient People -- Resilient Planet".

### **Activities:**

The **South Asia Disaster Knowledge Network (SADKN)** and the **Digital Vulnerability Atlas (DVA) of South Asia**, launched at a pre-conference event during the Global Platform 2011, are important initiatives in the realization of HFA Priority Area III – “Using Knowledge, Innovation and Education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels”.

The SADKN portal, with individual Country Pages of all SAARC Member States, provides for sharing of knowledge among stakeholders on disaster and risk reduction. The DVA, which combines spatial data on physical, demographic and socio-economic characteristics of different areas of each country on a Web GIS format, is useful in assessing local level risks so that appropriate measures can be initiated for reducing and mitigating disaster risks. SAARC has been able to connect scores of institutions and stakeholders at the local, national and regional levels through these networking strategies.

Projects like “Rapid Structural and Non-structural Assessment of School and Hospital Buildings” and “Development of Methodology and Guidelines on First-Cut-Seismic Microzonation” with focus on urban areas have been completed in 2011.

A comprehensive tool for “assessment of school and hospital safety for multi-hazards” and a framework for “care, protection and participation of children in disaster” have also been developed.

A **SAARC Agreement on Rapid Response to Natural Disasters** was signed in November 2011 during the 17<sup>th</sup> SARC Summit in the Maldives. It provides the regional mechanism for cooperation, should disaster strike Member States of SAARC. It would be operational once all SAARC Member States have ratified the agreement, which, so far, has been ratified by 5 countries.

The **Thimphu Statement on Climate Change**, adopted in 2010 during the 16<sup>th</sup> SAARC Summit in Bhutan, identified, among others, four major “initiatives” namely, Marine, Mountain, Monsoon and Climate-related Disasters. In this regard, the SAARC Regional Centers located in Bangladesh (Metrological Research), Bhutan (Forestry), India (Disaster Management) and Maldives (Coastal Zone Management) are engaged in implementing programs to integrate climate change adaptation (CCA) with disaster risk reduction (DRR).

A number of **trainings, workshops, expert group meetings, research, publications**, etc., have also been carried out to develop capacity, expertise and data sharing mechanism under effective knowledge management program for SAARC Member States. These would continue to be important activities for raising awareness, resilience and reducing disaster risks.

**Regional and international collaboration:**

SAARC also continues to collaborate with many **regional and international organizations**, such as UNISDR, UNEP, UN-ESCAP, UNOCHA, UNICEF; UNHABITAT; ADB, ADPC, ADRC-Japan, SACEP, GFDRR, World Bank, USFS, USAID, IRP, etc.

In many of the activities recalled above, I would like to acknowledge the technical and financial support of these organizations with grateful appreciation. SAARC looks forward to continue to work together with these and other stakeholders in building local and national level disaster safety and resilience in our own region and beyond.

In order to contribute to the global multi-stakeholder DRR and CCA endeavours, SAARC conducted HFA bi-annual sub-regional review for 2011-13 to identify the achievements, and the challenges which need to be addressed in the HFA implementation till 2015. SAARC also participated in Post-HFA processes, such as the Asian Ministerial Conference on DRR during which a SAARC regional consultation identified priority and critical issues for the region and made recommendations. We look forward to participating in consultations on HFA2 on SAARC regional issues in the coming period till 2015. Indeed, in moving forward, it would be important for the experiences and knowledge of as many stakeholders (communities, nations, IGOs, etc.) as possible to find a voice.

**Conclusion:**

I wish the Global Platform 2013 successful outcome in the noble objective of finding solutions to make our precious planet-earth safer for the present and future generations to live in safety, peace and harmony. I would also like to thank UNISDR for organizing the Global Platform, and for enabling SAARC to participate in the proceedings.

Thank you!