



**STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF  
SOUTH AFRICA**

**FOURTHSESSION OF THE GLOBAL  
PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

**GENEVA: MAY 2013**

**SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DISASTER  
MANAGEMENT CENTRE**

Mr President,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Country Representatives,  
Disaster Risk Reduction Partners,

On behalf of South Africa, my delegation wishes to express our deepest appreciation for being afforded the opportunity to present the strategic status report on the implementation of disaster risk reduction policy in our country. South Africa has come a long way in the implementation of the legislative framework governing disaster risk reduction in the country, while contributing to the regional and global agenda.

In line with international trends and our national objectives of effective management of resources, South Africa's Disaster Management policy and legislation underscores the importance of preventing human, economic, infrastructure, property losses, and avoiding environmental degradation.

Preparedness measures for more efficient rescue operations will always remain necessary, but there is common agreement that much greater attention should be directed to the introduction of preventive strategies aimed at saving lives and protecting assets.

Scarce resources are often diverted for disaster relief at the expense of growth and developmental opportunities, resulting in the worsening of the plight of poverty-stricken communities. In line with our Government's priorities, the disaster management approach in terms of our priorities pays specific attention to the pressing needs of poor communities in relation to both natural and human induced disasters.

Mr President,

The South African National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 highlights the elements of a decent standard of living for human beings as follows:“....They need adequate nutrition, they need transport to get to work, and they desire **safe communities** and clean neighbourhoods. These elements require action either from individuals, government, communities or the private sector.”

One of the critical actions to achieve this has been identified as implementing interventions to ensure environmental sustainability and resilience to future disasters.

South Africa has to adapt to the expected impacts of climate change, global warming and energy efficiency and in the same breath build the social, economic and physical resilience of our communities.

The South African Government proudly hosted a successful COP 17 event in Durban during November 2011. Among the many forums to discuss issues of climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster risk reduction was also one of the topics that received particular attention. Parliamentarians from around the world called on the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) "to prioritize disaster risk reduction and capacity-building as cross-cutting issues and to give them the utmost attention." One of the decisions of the Inter-Parliamentary Union reiterated its commitment to assist respective governments in implementing existing and future climate change and disaster risk reduction agreements.

To this end, I can confirm that stakeholders in the country have come to a realisation that no amount of effective service delivery, poverty reduction and sustainable development can be realised without the parallel implementation of the disaster reduction agenda. This is evident in the manner in which the function is taking a central position in the discussions and programming within various sectors, levels of government and other disciplines.

Like many other developing countries, South Africa, and its neighbours face increasing levels of disaster risk. It is exposed to a wide range of hazards, including

drought, fires, cyclones and severe storms that can trigger widespread hardship and devastation.

The negative impact of these disasters leave the country and its neighboursto deal with issues such as injury and the loss of lives, damage to infrastructure and the environment, disrupted livelihoods, schooling and social services which lead to a large and increased need for humanitarian assistance.

We are confident that the risk reduction priorities will be realised and that our programs will be in sync with the future framework post the Hyogo Framework Action 2005-2015 by bringing DRR within the mainstream service delivery, poverty reduction and sustainable development discourses (i.e. policy & practices).

My Government would like to express its continued support to the Global Platform as a multi-stakeholder mechanism to get role-players together where, among others, best practices can be shared and awareness raised, particularly on the importance of effectively implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action. We fully support the need to promote partnerships and international cooperation in reducing disaster risks, and particularly the building of capacity in those developing countries that need to be assisted to better mitigate and manage disaster risks.

I thank you

## **Legislative framework and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Priorities**

South African disaster management legislation is internationally reputed for its emphasis on prevention and its comprehensive approach to disaster risk reduction. However, since the promulgation of the Act on 15 January 2003 and during the subsequent commencement of the legislation in the various spheres of government, some challenges were experienced to a varying extent in implementing all aspects of the legislation effectively.

The key issues that require attention in current policy and legislation in South Africa have been highlighted in a number of research reports and submissions. In considering these reports and views, the need was acknowledged to call for a review of the Act.

Through the review process, the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) also intends to confirm the Priority Action 1 of the International Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA) to ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation.

One of the key amendments, seeks to expand the requirements for the development of disaster management plans to include the conducting of a risk assessment, mapping of vulnerable areas, measures to adapt to climate change and development of early warning mechanisms by organs of state within their functional sphere.

The need to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of disaster management efforts through the implementation of a different organisational form is also being addressed through a comprehensive process of establishing a government component and legislative amendments. It is argued that the disaster management function is better suited to be administered as an independent component due to reasons such as, but not limited to:

- i. Enabling quick decision-making on disaster management matters;
- ii. Enabling adequate funding mechanisms for disaster risk reduction, response , recovery and rehabilitation
- iii. Attracting and retaining specialised skills;
- iv. Enabling quick and decisive action in the face of or pre-empting disaster incidents;
- v. Enabling the development of specialised systems around training, accreditation, and quality assurance; and
- vi. Enabling it to have disaster risk reduction enforcement capacity.

During the previous GPDRR event of 2011, we outlined some of our strategic DRR projects being undertaken alongside our normal disaster response, recovery and rehabilitation interventions. We also outlined our future DRR priorities namely:

- To strengthen the bottom-up and top-to-bottom approach to DRR with a view to making all role players realise what their specific roles and responsibilities on DRR are.
- To improve participation of all stakeholders in a meaningful and constructive manner.
- To leverage funding to support the implementation of the legislation at all levels.
- To strengthen the links with SADC and African countries on DRR issues.

These measures were carried out successfully, with some room for improvement, and that these have enabled us to implement the three (3) strategic objectives as identified during 2005 with the adoption of the HFA. The following highlights outline some of the pointers in this regard.

South Africa hosted the second global Understanding Risk (UR) Forum in Cape Town from July 2-6, 2012. Organised in partnership with the Government of South Africa, the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN ISDR), the African Development Bank, GFDRR and the World Bank, the Forum convened more than 500 thought leaders and decision-makers from 86 countries to exchange knowledge and share best practice in disaster risk assessment.

The theme “Mapping Global Risk”, highlighted the essential role that hazard, vulnerability and exposure data plays in making informed decisions to reduce risk.

- **The more effective *integration of disaster risk considerations into sustainable development policies, planning and programming at all levels, with a special emphasis on disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness and vulnerability reduction;***
  - We continue to engage with organs of state across the spheres of government on issues of disaster management. Several disaster risk reduction plans were received from sectors, provincial, municipal and national stakeholders. These include roads and transport, electricity, water affairs, nuclear power, defense, police services, agriculture, amongst others.
  - Work has also been done to ensure the integration of disaster reduction measures within the municipal Integrated Development Plans (**IDPs**).
  - The country has also managed to mainstream some work of the Environmental Affairs sector in respect of climate change with the disaster reduction programmes. The discussion of the two programmes are always integrative of each other. The National Climate Change Response White Paper was published by the Department of Environmental Affairs. Linked thereto, the sector plans such as the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries climate change sector plans were gazetted for public comment.
- **The *development and strengthening of institutions, mechanisms and capacities at all levels, in particular at the community level, that can systematically contribute to building resilience to hazards;***
  - Disaster Management Centres (DMCs) have been established across provincial and municipal levels of government supported by the national centre;

- The national, provincial and municipal disaster management advisory forums (NDMAF/PDMAF/MDMF) are functional to serve as a platform for sharing information and exchanging ideas on DRR issues. These are supported by the established technical task teams (TTTs) led by the sectors with responsibility on specialised DRR matters;
  - A lot of work is also being done around the capacitation of Councillors through structured Councillor workshops across the country;
  - The country is also involved actively in the regional and sub-regional (AU &SADC) matters as they relate to DRR;
  - There is also active involvement of the business sector in DRR through initiatives such as the Business Adopt and Municipality (BAAM) programme;
  - Political forums are being encouraged at provincial and municipal levels to oversee issues of DRR in development planning and implementation.
- ***The systematic incorporation of risk reduction approaches into the design and implementation of emergency preparedness, response and recovery programmes in the reconstruction of affected communities.***
    - Mechanisms for event based planning have been put in place to ensure that successful staging of event of any kind. Such events include: the AFCON in 2013, the ANC national conference in 2012, the Brics Summit in 2013, etc.)
    - The country has also developed response protocols and established the emergency disaster grant to inform timeous intervention in the face of disaster incidents;
    - Long term funding for disaster reconstruction and rehabilitation programs is covered through the government budget planning processes.