



Message by Prime Minister of Dominica, Mr. Roosevelt Skerrit on 2017 International Day for Disaster Reduction

12 October 2017 - “Home Safe Home” is the slogan for this year’s International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR), and it resonates strongly with the Caribbean people who have just experienced hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria.

“Home Safe Home” is also a strong reminder that in 2017 millions of people around the world have been displaced by drought, floods, storms, wildfires and earthquakes. These events often deprive people of the ability to earn a living as well.

Today, thousands in Antigua and Barbuda, Anguilla, Cuba, St. Maarten, St. Thomas, the British Virgin Islands, the Turks and Caicos Islands, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic are without a roof over their heads, and lack adequate access to water, schools, medical services, or roads. And too many are in mourning for lost loved ones.

Hurricanes not only destroy property and take lives, they leave psychological scars. The howling of the wind, the sound of a roof lifting; these are experiences many never forget.

The 2017 edition of the International Day for Disaster Reduction is about reducing the numbers of people affected by disasters, one of the seven targets of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction adopted by UN Member States two years ago.

Both this year and last year all 72,000 people living on Dominica have been affected by disasters. Some have lost their roofs and livelihoods for the second time as a result of Hurricane Maria.

The only way we can reduce the number of people on this island from being disaster affected is to build back better to a standard that can withstand the rainfall, wind intensity and degree of storm surge which we can now expect from tropical storms in the age of climate change.

In Dominica, we aim to become the world's first climate-resilient nation. We cannot do this alone. We need international cooperation.

We are among those countries which contribute least to climate change but over the last two years we have suffered the consequences of two devastating storms which have left us struggling to stay on the path of sustainable development.

More funding must be made available to vulnerable countries so that they can effectively mitigate the risks associated with such events.

Climate change is a hard reality for all of us here in the Caribbean.

On International Day for Disaster Reduction we ask that the world does not turn its back on this problem but starts to address it in a meaningful way through reducing greenhouse gas emissions and investing in climate action and disaster risk reduction for small island developing states where unique ways of life are in danger of extinction.