**STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA AT THE THIRD SESSION OF THE GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION GENEVA, SWITZERLAND 8-13 MAY 2011**

**BY HON. DEPUTY MINISTER FOR THE INTERIOR, KWABENA AKYEAMPONG**

**Mr. Chairman,**

**Excellencies,**

**Distinguished Participants,**

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is my singular honour to be given the privilege to address the Third Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

First of all, I wish to, on behalf of the Government and people of Ghana, express my profound appreciation to the United Nations for convening this global meeting for us to assess strides made in reducing risks in our respective countries and to re-affirm our commitment to global disaster risk reduction.

May I also use this Platform to commend all member countries for their continuous efforts towards Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation.

Mr. Chairman,

Ghana is prone to natural and man-made disasters including floods, earthquakes, domestic, industrial and bushfires, rain and windstorms, disease epidemics, pest and insect infestation, boat accidents, road traffic accidents and many others. Causes of disasters include climate change, rapid urbanization, rapid population growth, environmental degradation, poverty and so on.

The nature and frequency of disasters is changing at an alarming rate. As a result of climate change, weather related disasters are increasing in intensity. Our country has suffered excessive rainfall leading to overflow of our major water bodies. For example, for the first time in twenty (20) years, the level of the Akosombo Dam Reservoir which provides electricity to Ghana and its neighbouring West African countries including Benin and Togo rose to 274.8 ft, close to the maximum of 278 ft in 2010. Regions which have communities either close to the Volta River or lying along the path of the river towards the south of the Hydro Electric Power Generator in the country were flooded by the spill.

In 2010, over 377,652 people were internally displaced due to the floods. The 2010 floods was one of the most severe catastrophes Ghana ever had to face and a good test for Disaster Preparedness and Response. Two dams on the same river in the Greater Accra Region collapsed causing massive flooding at Ashiaman. The same rain affected the Western part of the country washing away a major bridge at Agona Swedru in the Central Region. In all, sixty three (63) deaths were recorded with nine (9) injuries.

The devastation caused by the floods was unprecedented in view of the fact that some areas which were affected by the Akosombo spillage had already been hit by flood waters from the Bagre and Kompeanga dams in neighboring Burkina Faso. According to Volta River Authority, (VRA) there is a 20 - 30 percent chance of a spillage next year if the rainfall pattern remains the same.

Mr. Chairman,

In line with the Hyogo Framework for Action, (HFA) the government of Ghana has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring the mainstreaming of Disaster Risk Reduction in its overall development agenda. The need for this drive has become even more necessary, now that the country has achieved the middle income status. The need therefore to sustain the economic gains cannot be overemphasized. Again, at a time that the country is set to produce oil, it is imperative to ensure that all possible risks are identified and steps taken to reduce their impacts. Disaster Risk Reduction is now among the key factors in considering good governance and sustainable development.

To this end, several key Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) initiatives have been undertaken with the aim of building the resilience of communities to disasters. They include the following:

**Policy Framework**

* In pursuance of its commitment to ensuring that Disaster Risk Reduction is rooted into the national fabric, the government of Ghana has strengthened the Disaster Management System in the country. This is being done through a new legislation that will make the disaster management system more proactive. For example, the proposed new law seeks to establish a disaster management fund to manage disasters effectively and efficiently.
* A National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy has been developed, validated and adopted by disaster management stakeholders. The purpose of the Policy is to ensure that all public institutions and non governmental institutions/organizations factor Disaster Risk Reduction into their individual organizational .planning budgeting and operations. The DRR policy seeks also to enjoin the local Government to take ownership of DRR and support such programmes and issues by means of budgetary allocation byelaws and the incorporation into development initiatives.
* A draft National Environmental Policy and a National Climate Change Policy Framework have been developed which fuses Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation. In this direction, the National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are working closely in the area of Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation. Last year, programmes were carried out jointly by the two organizations to build the capacity of District Assemblies (Local Government) on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation mainstreaming. This was done in the area of budgeting, planning and designing of structural works as well as implementation.
* Ghana has initiated moves to review the National Building Regulation and the Building Code to ensure that the issues of DRR are brought to bear on all construction projects in the country. Building Guides are also being developed to simplify construction concepts for local builders.

**Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change**

**Adaptation (CCA)**

* In response to the UN’s recommendation for nations to establish Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation, the Republic of Ghana launched its National Platform in May 2006. Apart from the National Platform, the country has established Sub National Platforms in nine out of the ten administrative regions of Ghana. The Government plans to establish district platforms in all the 170 districts in the country.

**Building Gender Responsive Culture in Disaster Risk Reduction in Ghana**

Women and children are the most affected when disaster strikes, yet they are more often than not marginalized from decision-making processes at all levels. As an effort to sensitize and increase women's understanding of Disaster Risk Reduction, the National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO) in collaboration with ABANTU for Development, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organized regional forums on the theme “Promoting Gender Responsiveness in Disaster Risk Management/Reduction”. These Forums were organized in all the ten regions of Ghana.

Furtherance to this, fifteen most affected districts in the worst disaster prone regions in the country have been selected for sensitization in Gender mainstreaming in DRR.

**Strengthening Early Warning System in Ghana**

The Ghana Meteorological Agency has acquired Automatic Weather Stations to improve the data gathering system. Also, to improve the weather surveillance, Government is procuring radar to locate areas of severe weather and precipitation. Government has also procured seismograghs for effective earthquake monitoring.

Indigenous and scientific methods are being used and promoted to step up monitoring and early warning for Pest and Insect Infestations.

**Strengthening Disaster Preparedness for Effective Response at all levels**

In order to ensure an integrated national response for disasters, the National Contingency Plan captures potential disasters such as floods, earthquakes, Pandemic Influenza (H1N1) and oil spillage. The document is used together with the National Disaster Management Plan and the National Standard Operating Procedures. Furthermore, with the support of UNDP, Ghana has prepared District Disaster Management Plans for some of the most vulnerable districts in the country.

**Disaster Risk Reduction in the School Curriculum**

An assessment of the extent to which DRR issues are addressed in the Ghanaian school curriculum is underway. The result of the assessment will enable the country develop guidelines to appropriately incorporate DRR into the school curriculum.

**National Climate Change Adaptation Strategies**

Ghana has developed a National Climate Change Adaptation strategy document. The strategies amongst others touched on Water resources management; Energy; Health; Agriculture; Afforestation/Reforestation and Coastal zone Protection

**Challenges**

* Inadequate funding for efforts to create congenial environment to support DRR. Ghana has already developed an action plan for which we seek partnerships in order for us to meet the outcome of the HFA to reduce loss of life.

Mr. Chairman,

As we build our individual countries’ resilience, we must also ensure Regional resilience as well as global resilience. This, though places an enormous challenge on us, however, we must remain undaunted and focused. It is my conviction that with a unified commitment and self determination to make the world a safer place for humanity, we shall succeed.