**Statement by Hon’ble Lyonpo Minjur Dorji, Minister for Home and Cultural Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan on the 3rd Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Geneva, 8-13 May 2011**

**Mr. Chairman,**

**Excellencies,**

**Distinguished Delegates,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great pleasure and privilege for me and my delegation to attend this Third Session of the Global Platform. We bring to this gathering, the warmest greetings and best wishes from His Majesty the King, the People and the Royal Government of Bhutan for the success of this important conference.

**Mr. Chairman**

The theme of the Global Platform - ***“Invest Today for a Safer Tomorrow: Increased Investment in Local Action***” - is indeed very significant for Bhutan with our developmental activities highly dependent on climate-sensitive sectors such as - agriculture, hydropower and forestry. Bhutan is also experiencing various impacts of climate change, the most significant being the melting of glaciers at an accelerated rate of 30-60 meter per decade due to the increase in temperature, leading to increased risk from Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs).

Everywhere disaster impacts destroy hard earned development gains, reversing poverty reduction and human development efforts undermining the little gains we have made towards the Millennium Development Goals.

The earthquake and floods in 2009 and the recent spate of fire on human settlements and unusual events of strong windstorms in the last two years have significantly set back the sustained progress made by Bhutan in achieving the Millennium Development and our national development goals.

**Nevertheless, Mr. Chairman**

Bhutan has made rapid progress in enhancing our disaster management and risk reduction capacities. And our development policies guided by the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH) with its four pillars - which are equitable economic development, environmental conservation, cultural promotion and good governance, have been complimentary to these efforts.

In line with the GNH concept, we are required by our Constitution to maintain 60% of our total area to be maintained under forest covers for all times to come.

The existing and proposed disaster management policies in Bhutan are based on the principles of sustainability, ecological stability and cultural acceptability where the local communities play a central part in the implementation.

I would like to stress here thatwith the increasing frequency of hazards and causing tremendous disasters, it is imperative that we invest in building local capacities and institutions, especially for Bhutan with our remote communities which are at times difficult to access due to the rugged terrain.

Recognizing the need for making systematic efforts towards managing disaster risks, Bhutan adopted the National Disaster Risk Management Framework (NDRMF) in 2006.

The framework is a holistic disaster management strategy emphasizing the need to institute a strong decentralized multi-sector system at all levels, especially in the local communities. The framework is based on the principles and Five Priorities for Action espoused in the Hyogo Framework.

**Mr. Chairman**

I would also like to take this opportunity to report here that to highlight the importance of integration of disaster management and cultural heritage, an ***International Conference on Disaster Management and Cultural Heritage with the theme “Living in Harmony with the Four Elements - Earth, Water, Fire and Wind”***, was successfully organized by Bhutan in December 2010 with active participation from several renowned experts and scholars from around the world.

As a result of the conference, a set of guiding principles and recommendations for integrating cultural heritage and disaster management was formulated in the Thimphu Document. Furthermore, to take forward these guiding principles and recommendations, an Action Plan is being formulated and will soon be endorsed by the Government of Bhutan. I would like to put forward this Action Plan to all interested stakeholders to be a part of it and help us to achieve the objectives

Finally, to reiterate the theme of the Platform – let us all ***“Invest today for a safer tomorrow – now is the time to invest in local action and build safer communities”.***

With this, I would like to thank Mr. Chairman and everyone in this gathering for your kind attention and wish the Platform every success.

**Thank You and Tashi Delek!!!**