

Statement by H.E. Wayne McCook, Permanent Representative of

Jamaica to the Office of the UN and its Specialized Agencies at

Geneva

15 July 2014

Thank you Mister/Madam Co-Chairman,

The delegation of Jamaica joins in congratulating you on your election to the chair (Co Chair) of this important meeting.

We wish to thank the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Disaster Risk Reduction, Ms. Margareta Wahlstrom and her office, as well as fellow members of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee for their contribution to our work.

This Prepcom with over 300 participants has demonstrated the deep commitment of all stakeholders to meaningful Global action on the issue of disaster risk reduction and the post 2015 DRR agenda which we intend to elaborate in Sendai at the 3rd WCDRR.

Jamaica as a small island developing state accords high priority to comprehensive disaster risk reduction. DRR must be prioritized at the local, national, regional and international levels and must be mainstreamed in development policy and across all sectors.

Mr. Chairman, building on the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) we have elaborated national policies that emphasise preparedness measures through legislation, plans, policies and programmes. We have also pursued mitigation projects, infrastructure hardening and integrated early warning systems especially for vulnerable groups.

We have also played an active part in the development and implementation of DRR policies at the regional level through the Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA). Indeed we have strongly supported the comprehensive Caribbean disaster management strategy 2013 to 2023 on which we have based inputs into the broader global agenda on DRR and Response.

Mister Chairman,

It is against this background of focused implementation of key HFA goals at the national and regional levels that we consider the way

forward in elaborating the post 2015 framework for disaster risk reduction.

We are convinced that without the coherent international approach to DRR guided by the HFA, many of the gains we have witnessed would not have been achieved, including reduction in levels of casualties and damage to the infrastructure and the environment through more effective DRR measures.

At the same time, we recognize that we have struggled with certain of the HFA goals such:

- ensuring that DRR is a national and a local priority with a strong, institutional basis for implementation.
- Establishing and strengthening measures to identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning and reduce the underlying risk factors.

At the same time, new challenges in the area of DRR have emerged that require our focused attention and the setting of goals and priorities that are responsive, measurable and attainable.

We are therefore convinced that a meaningful post 2015 framework for disaster risk reduction must :

1. Address the link between DRR and climate change.
2. Continue work to mainstream DRR in strategic development policies and across all sectors.
3. Promote further resilience building, infrastructure hardening and capacity building at the community level.

We are also convinced that now is the time and this is the process through which we must build on the momentum from cross cutting and complementary discussions that affect DRR, including in particular, those relating to climate change and the elaboration of the post 2015 sustainable development goals.

It will be important for the international community to ensure that there is coherence in all the mechanisms that are being developed to address these related goals.

Permit me to focus on the issue of climate change and DRR which is of particular concern to Jamaica and other Caribbean countries most of whom are SIDS.

A robust agenda for disaster risk reduction must complement determined action on climate change. This is crucial since we all recognize that although certain climate change effects are unavoidable and can therefore only be addressed through comprehensive and effective risk management programmes, we have a duty to prevent the preventable and mitigate that which can be mitigated. Adaptation alone cannot be enough.

At minimum we have an immediate duty to ensure that we do not exacerbate the problem by failing to take the necessary and doable steps to reduce the threats posed by climate change including sea level rise and higher incidents of catastrophic weather events, for example.

Mr. Chairman

We recognize that sustainable development is imperilled by unmitigated risk on the one hand, and fostered by effective measures

of risk reduction and resilience on the other. Building resilience into all development and infrastructure policies is, therefore, imperative.

As we look to Sendai, we should aim for an international framework that will help all countries to give effect to the goals of DRR and resilience in practical and measurable ways. These efforts must rely on evidence based approaches and we therefore urge concerted efforts to identify and define the underlying risk drivers and emerging hazards that can precipitate disasters.

There must also be a focussed approach to not only managing and reducing existing risk but also to prevent the creation of new risk. There must be an equal commitment to building resilience across all sectors, with a strong focus on a bottom-up approach where communities play a fundamental role in disaster risk reduction plans and programmes.

Communities must therefore be empowered through inclusion in multi-stakeholder dialogue on DRR policy at all levels and must be afforded access to accurate information and resources to fulfil these tasks.

Mister/Madam Co-Chairman,

We know that merely elaborating goals cannot be enough.

Robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms supported by well defined and measurable targets and indicators are key components of policy making today. The DRR agenda must embrace this.

No country is immune from disasters we all suffer from one or the other manifestation of the global disaster risks and events.

With that recognition firmly in mind, we must pursue strong international partnerships and cooperation. Efforts at the international level must take into account the specific characteristics of countries that face particular vulnerabilities such as SIDS and ensure that approaches to disaster response, recovery and rehabilitation as well as resilience take these considerations fully into account.

For Jamaica we see collective approaches, commitments and actions not as a luxury but rather a necessity. A post 2015 DRR agenda must therefore complement and build upon efforts already underway at regional, sub-regional and national levels.

Mister/Madam Co-Chairman,

The Government of Jamaica remains committed to this process and stands ready to engage going forward on the elaboration of the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction.

Thank you.