

STATEMENT FOR THE KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION TO BE DELIVERED DURING THE 1ST PREPARATORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE 3RD WORLD CONFERENCE FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION IN GENEVA – 13 JULY 2014.

Made by the Principal Secretary in the Deputy Prime Minister's Office

Chairperson

Colleagues

Distinguished Participants

INTRODUCTION

In 2005, the Kingdom of Swaziland, like the rest of the countries of the world committed in Hyogo, Japan to building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters by becoming signatories to the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015. This framework became a global guide to a systematic approach towards reducing the vulnerabilities of nations on risks and hazards, as well as prepare and respond to those hazards.

The Kingdom like many countries in the SADC region has been affected by mainly natural disasters such as protracted draught as well as minor floods and storms and over the years, we have seen a great increase in the frequency of occurrence and the severity of these disasters. The country has made great gains in the operationalization and implementation of the HFA as follows:

HFA PRIORITY 1: ENSURE THAT DISASTER RISK REDUCTION IS A NATIONAL AND LOCAL PRIORITY WITH A STRONG INSTITUTIONAL BASIS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Disaster Risk reduction initiatives in the Kingdom of Swaziland are governed by the Disaster Management Act of 2006 which was informed by the Disaster Management Policy drafted in 2009 and reviewed in 2010 and operationalized by the Disaster strategic plan. All these documents are aligned to the Hyogo Framework of Action as well as the SADC strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The Disaster Management Act provided for the institutionalization of Disaster Risk Reduction through the establishment of the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) which is under the Deputy Prime minister's Office and is to coordinate a consistent system for disaster risk management focusing on decreasing vulnerability and improving emergency preparedness and response. The Agency has recently been gazetted into a public enterprise to provide it with the independence for swift action particularly in terms of disaster preparedness and response and budget has been made towards all its activities reflecting government's commitment.

HFA PRIORITY 2: IDENTIFY, ASSESS AND MONITOR DISASTER RISKS AND ENHANCE EARLY WARNING

Swaziland has been affected by natural disasters which are climatic in nature. As such the monitoring of the weather patterns has been one of the major exercises. Climate and weather hazards are monitored through the Southern Africa Regional Outlook forum and the country's meteorological services. The country has also developed a national early warning system in the health sector which has been decentralized to the country's four regions as well as an early warning unit housed in the Ministry of Agriculture that is responsible for providing early warning information on the expected weather conditions particularly on crop production in liaison with the Department of Meteorological Services

HFA PRIORITY 3: USE KNOWLEDGE, INNOVATION AND EDUCATION TO BUILD A CULTURE OF SAFETY AND RESILIENCE AT ALL LEVELS

Efforts of creating awareness on Disaster Risk Reduction have been such that the National Curriculum Centre (NCC) has developed a curriculum integrating DRR in primary and secondary schools. To date information, education and communication (IEC) materials have been developed to aid learning and teaching on DRR in schools.

The country declared HIV as a national disaster and a number of gains have been made in educating the population about HIV prevention to create a culture of safety.

The need to sensitize communities on Disaster Risk Reduction Issues has been identified as very critical and is a priority for the country in order to build a disaster resilient Swazi Nation.

HFA PRIORITY 4: REDUCING UNDERLYING RISK FACTORS

The country has endeavoured to understand the underlying risk factors to the Swazi population through profiling the types of risks it is vulnerable to as well as conduct a study on socio-economic and environmental impacts of disasters. Much effort is still necessary to improve our understanding on the underlying factors in order to be better prepared to respond.

HFA PRIORITY 5: STRENGTHEN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS FOR EFFECTIVE RESPONSE AT ALL LEVELS

The Disaster Risk Reduction initiative in the Kingdom of Swaziland has mainly been responsive in nature. However, much effort has gone into building the capacity of various sectors in emergency preparedness and response. The Ministry of Education and Training has

mainstreamed Emergency Preparedness and response such that an annual budget of E2 million is devoted to these initiatives.

The Ministry of Health has also made great gain in this regard as it has a fully-fledged department of Emergency Preparedness and Response responsible for providing leadership and coordination on health emergencies,

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING DRR AGENDA

Although the Kingdom of Swaziland has made some gains in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action there have been some bottlenecks and these include the;

- Weak articulation of Disaster Risk Reduction in national development plans, strategies and sector plans;
- Weak early warning systems at all levels resulting in poor communication of early warning information for early action.
- Poor perception of disaster issues among the public and within institutions. There is still a need to review public messages in order for the public to better understand disaster related concepts
- Low involvement of the media on DRR related issues: Media in Swaziland (television and radio) play an important role in disseminating public information and educational programmes that help to improve the population's knowledge and behaviour in the face of hazards and risks.
- Lack of interaction between professional originators of warnings and professional media presenters and programmers.

DRR IN SWAZILAND POST 2015

With the enabling environment in terms of legislation the main goal for Swaziland Post 2015 is to build a disaster resilient Swazi nation. Therefore great emphasis will be on:

- Advocating and facilitating the mainstreaming of DRR national strategies and plans of action; plans of local government as well as government ministries;
- Strengthening early warning systems for early action;
- Strengthening emergency preparedness and response systems and;
- Improving awareness of communities on risk factors and hazards for behaviour modification and improved resilience

With everyone's support all this will be possible. I thank you Chairperson.