



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR G MTSHALI  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE  
UNITED NATIONS**

**TO THE  
FIRST SESSION  
OF THE GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK  
REDUCTION**

**GENEVA**

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*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*

United Nations Under-Secretary-General, Mr John Holmes,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the United Nations World Summit in New York in 2005, our Heads of State and Governments reaffirmed their commitment to “support the efforts of countries, in particular developing countries, to strengthen their capacities at all levels in order to prepare for and respond rapidly to natural disasters and mitigate their impact.” They also reaffirmed their commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in particular to “ensure environmental sustainability” and thus to “integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes”. The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002 had placed emphasis on the critical need for risk and vulnerability reduction in order to attain sustainable development.

From a regional perspective and within the context of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the African Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction has been developed. The implementation of the 2005-2010 Programme of Action is crucial to reducing the debilitating impact of disasters, particularly those associated with climate change and emerging urban risks, on African countries and their economies.

Together with our partners in the Southern African Development Conference, South Africa participates in the Disaster Management Task Team, which has been charged with the region's implementation of the disaster risk reduction strategic plan. Beneficial partnerships have been created, and, as a region, we are able to coordinate the sharing of human, material and other resources to assist affected communities.

It is tragic that the developing countries bear the brunt of most disasters whose impact inevitably goes beyond the immediate devastation. The perennial toll on human lives and infrastructure exacerbates poverty and reverses important gains made in economic development. Whilst

acknowledging the significant strides made by the United Nations through the ISDR in promoting and establishing programmes and strategies for disaster risk reduction, there remains a critical need for strengthening the support mechanisms to assist developing countries.

Chairperson,

South Africa has adopted an integrated approach to designing its Disaster Risk Reduction Programme, utilising the principles of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction:

1. The South African Disaster Management Act was promulgated in 2002 and serves as the legislative framework for an integrated approach to Disaster Risk management. The Act places emphasis on measures that reduce the vulnerability of disaster-prone communities and infrastructure, and facilitates disaster management capacity building, training and education. Specific emphasis has been placed by the Government of South Africa on operationalising the Act. As a consequence of this, the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) is in place and functional, as are centres in provincial and municipal areas.
2. One of the service delivery tools at the Municipal level is the Integrated Development Plan, which is premised on the pro-active reduction of disaster risk, through addressing community needs in a holistic manner. A platform is therefore provided for local leadership to engage communities in identifying and addressing most of the underlying threats to their safety. In this regard the government has engaged with specialists and academics to develop a national risk profile for the country.

We have also made progress with the Schools Disaster Risk Reduction campaign of 2006 and 2007. The children of South Africa displayed their concerns about the impact of disasters on communities, through songs, drama, role plays and graphic art. We have made the theme "Disaster Risk Reduction Begins at School" a reality. These learners have increased their understanding of disaster risk reduction and have called for concrete action by

the government, such as the “disaster-proofing” of schools, the building of safer schools, the prevention of wild fires and the reduction of environmental degradation.

South Africa’s hosting of the 2010 Soccer World Cup constitutes a milestone for the African continent. To enable us to be prepared, we are prioritising the establishment of Disaster Management Centres in our FIFA World Cup Host Cities.

Chairperson,

Without innovative strategies that integrate development and disaster reduction imperatives, the MDGs cannot become a reality. Although each State has primary responsibility for its own sustainable development and for taking effective measures to reduce disaster risk, international cooperation and partnerships to support these national efforts are crucial.

As our President Thabo Mbeki indicated in his statement to the UN General Assembly 61<sup>st</sup> session last year, as Chair of the G77: “This Organisation of the peoples of the world cannot merely note the unacceptable situation that Africa would not achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. We need further, focused and concrete programmes to accelerate development in Africa ...”. The call by the President for an integrated international response requires us to look at functional partnerships across the range of disaster risks, including rapid and slow onset disasters, to benefit all regions.

Only by sharing our respective experiences of challenges confronted and progress made, can we move implementation forward and make the creation of resilient societies a reality. My delegation looks forward to contributing positively towards this objective.

I thank you.