

**SECOND AFRICA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION,
MINISTERIAL SEGMENT,
NAIROBI, KENYA: 16 APRIL 2010,
Ms Margareta Wahlstrom, Special Representative of the Secretary General for Disaster Risk
Reduction.**

Joint action and partnership in implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action
and the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction

Excellencies, The Right Honourable Deputy Prime Minister of Kenya, Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, Honourable Dr. Naomi Shaban, Minister of State for Special Programmes, Secretary-General of WMO, Mr Michel Jarraud, Madame Rhoda-Peace, AU Commissioner, Rural Economy and Agriculture, Ministers and Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my honor to join you for the important occasion of the Second Africa Ministerial Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction. Your presence here is a demonstration of the significance that the challenge of rising costs and disruptions to development planning caused by disasters and their consequences, pose to countries in Africa. Today, you will consider the recommendations of the Expert group to extend and strengthen the implementation of the Program of Action for the Africa Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy.

This Second Africa Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction is convened in parallel to another important conference for the Ministers responsible for Meteorology in this same conference centre. Without the results that the WMO Meteorological conference aims to achieve, we will be weakened in our work to achieve disaster risk reduction goals.

Allow me at this point to extend my sincere appreciation to the Government of Kenya for its generous hosting and welcome to the two Conferences. The results of

the two conferences, being closely interdependent, is important for the welfare of African people and countries. My special appreciation also to the Vice Prime Minister and Minister for Finance we are specifically gratified with your presence here to listen to the challenges our colleagues in the expert group have presented over these past two days of work. Minister of State for Special Programmes, Government of Kenya, and all our partners, in particular, the African Union Commission, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) of the World Bank whose support made these two events possible and all the UN, NGOs, civil society organisations, the African Development Bank and the World Bank. They are all partners in the enterprise to reduce the impact of disasters. The vision of the Programme of Action also supports the ambitious targets set at the Second Session of the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction from June 2009, namely: (1) to accelerate the application of risk reduction as a tool to adapt to climate change; (2) to increase investments in risk reduction, using development, humanitarian and recovery opportunities; and (3) to secure safe schools and hospitals, and work with local authorities towards resilient cities.

While the World reviews the progress towards achieving the MDGs in 2010 , many of sub Saharan African countries will not be able to achieve MDGs by 2015. The Economic Commission for Africa reports that the number of poor people in Africa has actually risen since the 1990s by over 90 million, while the average income of the poor has declined, indicating worsening income distribution within the countries. The UN Global Assessment Report on Disaster Reduction, 2009, highlights that in sub-Saharan Africa, during the drought of 2001–2003, an estimated 206 million people, or 32% of the region's population, were undernourished. Food security is a major issue confronting too many Sub Saharan nations.

The answer to achieve an accelerated pace on halving poverty and hunger lies in investing with determination and a long term view to reduce the underlying causes of droughts and floods, so that progress towards the MDGs is not set back by disaster losses. Shift from absorbing the losses as relief cost, to a developmental approach that prevents and mitigates remains imperative, to reduce the costs to social and economic infrastructure and human lives. It is urgent to double – and I would say triple - our commitment to the correct integrated strategies and actions : to integrate disaster risk reduction into national development plans, in particular poverty strategy plans, land-use and human settlement strategies and related priority budgetary allocations, to preserve their individual and regional socio-economic stability.

Today, almost 40% of the population in Africa live in cities or urban environments, and African cities are the fastest growing world wide. Half of Africa's population will be urbanized by 2050, according to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT). Rapid, unplanned urbanisation, including the alarming rate of growth of urban slums, is creating high risk patterns of risk accumulation and exposing an increasingly large proportion of the population to floods, landslides, epidemics and other hazards. Few governments and cities have the capacities to keep up the pace on developing the urban infrastructures as population grows. Cities need to be made resilient, that is the objective.

The ISDR just now is launching the biennial 2010-2011 World Disaster Risk Reduction Campaign entitled “Making Cities Resilient – My city is getting ready!” that will call on mayors and local governments to lead and to focus attention on cities strengths and vulnerabilities, exchange learning , and propose innovative measures to help their city and municipality become safer and more disaster resilient. Hospitals and schools represent key community infrastructures of focus and I wish to urge African Governments to critically assess such vital infrastructures' resilience to disasters to establish national action plans to ensure safe schools and hospitals for all

by 2015. Support the valuable work undertaken to facilitate access for African girls and boys to education in a safe environment.

Each year an average of 12.5 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa alone are affected by disasters. However, recurrent smaller scale disasters represent an even higher challenge for Governments as they represent regular high cost in Governments' budgets, and silently and persistently erode the capacities of Africans to survive or prosper. These disasters are the real disasters, that rarely appear on newspapers front pages, and very rarely in Government statistics and national accounts. The situation is becoming even worse with possible catastrophic impact of climate change.

We note that achievements were made in Africa over the recent years in addressing the challenges created by these facts. Africa was the first region in the world to adopt a regional common framework to work together to reduce disaster risk and impact. The extended program presented to you today, is a continuation of work that has been started but also reflects a determination to accelerate and increase the investments and focus of this work. National governments with the support of their sub-regional organisations including Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the AUC have reported progress on disaster risk reduction policies, programmes and the implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Annual reports have been compiled in partnership with ISDR. However, the expert meeting reports major challenges to their ability to make as fast progress as they wish, and I will share the most important with you. The first one is the lack of coordination and appropriate mechanisms, with this follows the difficulties of information flow and simple means of accessing information. Add to this the well known issues of human technical resources and financial resources. There fore, we

turn to the Ministries of Finance and Planning – and hope some of you are here in the Conference to hear our appeal for your engagement.

High-level political commitment to reducing disaster risk is a key to success and in Africa both Government leaders and Parliamentarians have demonstrated such engagement and willingness to lead. We have worked with a group of active and committed parliamentarians from all parts of Africa – some of them are represented here today. They are crucial as legislators to establish rules, legislate, and promote and have been in particularly helpful in demonstrating the value of using risk reduction as a first instrument for adaptation to climate change. They have mobilized political action and support at the highest level. And we hope more will engage.

Finally, the conclusions of the Climate Change Conference held in Copenhagen, Denmark last December, reconfirmed that climate change, disaster risk, vulnerability and development are closely interlinked, and must be solved in cooperation. As such, disaster risk reduction and the Hyogo Framework for Action's implementation will support climate change adaptation targets and processes. Disaster risk reduction offers a triple win approach: Implementing disaster risk reduction policies and programmes can limit the impacts of climate-related hazards, directly support adaptation to climate change, and help to alleviate poverty. I therefore strongly encourage African governments continue to advocate disaster risk reduction as a core strategy for climate change adaptation in the climate change talks beyond Copenhagen leading to the next important climate change conference in Mexico City later this year. In this context, I wish to recommend a further involvement of the private sector and young entrepreneurs to identify innovative actions in support of climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and food security. Africa is both an urbanising and a young continent with high proportion of its people in the age group below 30. Private enterprise and investments in urban infrastructure can create engine of growth to reduce poverty, hunger and ensure stability.

The UNISDR System – and you see them represented and present here during this Conference- has been working closely with the regional and sub-regional organisations in Africa to support countries in developing plans and capacities and provide strategic guidance and technical support in advancing the disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation , risk identification, assessment, monitoring and early warning programmes, public awareness on urban risk reduction, and climate change. Those partners bring differing expertise and resources to work in partnership with the African countries’ own resources and technical knowledge, to mobilize Africa’s private sector to contribute to reducing risk and to risk proof its own investments. What we together must achieve and commit to is better coordination, to commit to coherence of action and policy guidance. Only this way of working will ensure that real and visible progress is made.

The implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action – to which the Africa Disaster Risk Reduction Programme is aligned, will go through a mid-term review in 2010 to assess the progress made half-way to the implementation phase, identify remaining urgent gaps and adjust the global strategy for 2015 and beyond. In this context, the holding of the Second Africa Ministerial Conference is very timely and will serve as an effective preparatory process to the formal mid-term review. At the same time the MDG review takes place. We are trying to make sure that the mutually supportive strategies and action plans are closely interlinked in planning and implementation, and we encourage you, as you may have the opportunity to promote the inclusion of disaster risk reduction in the development objectives of MDG as well as in your national development plans and poverty reduction strategies. It is an opportunity we all have this year. Let’s use it!

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Finally, Ministers who are hear today, experts and organisations are looking to you to support and help make real the work done by your experts and your organisations to address the challenges laid out here

We thank you for your support and engagement,