



**SPEECH BY DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, HO. UHURU KENYATTA, EGH, MP DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 2<sup>ND</sup> MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (DRR) IN AFRICA HELD AT THE KENYATTA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE, NAIROBI, KENYA ON 16<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2010.**

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H.E. Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, African Union Commission

H.E. Margareta Wahlstrom, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction

Mr. Michel Jarraud, Secretary General, World Meteorological Organization

Hon. Minister Naomi Shaban, Ministry of State for Special Programmes, Kenya

Ministers in charge of Disaster Risk Reduction in Africa

Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners

Experts on Disaster Risk Reduction

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen

1. I feel quite honoured to have the privilege to officiate at this historic occasion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in Africa.
2. I appreciate this opportunity to share with you some views and thoughts on various issues bedeviling our Continent on matters of Disaster Risk Reduction. However, before I do so, let me first take this early opportunity to extend to all of you a warm welcome to Kenya. On behalf of the people and the Government of Kenya, I wish

to express my gratitude to you for bestowing on Kenya the honour of hosting this important Conference.

3. Secondly, as you are aware, The Rt. Hon. Prime Minister was scheduled to be with us this morning. However, due to unavoidable circumstances, he was not able to join us. He, in this context, requested me to pass his sincere regards to you all and to let you know that he very much appreciates the importance of this conference and looks forward to receiving the recommendations you will be coming up with.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

4. I must say that the presence of so many of you here today demonstrates your common resolve to deal with these critical issues facing Africa. Indeed these issues appropriately deserve your time and attention, especially at these times of numerous and frequent disasters.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

5. You will appreciate that in the past decade or so, there has been an upsurge all over the world incidences of disaster, be they **floods, droughts, landslides, tsunami, hurricanes or terrorist activities**, many lives are lost and massive damages are inflicted to infrastructure. In mitigation, enormous amounts of national development resources are diverted to respond to these challenges.
6. It is estimated that the recent disasters that have hit various parts of the world have caused damages estimated at between 10-15% of the gross domestic product of those countries. This scale of impact in developing countries has significantly eroded their ability to attain their national development goals, that they have set for themselves, as well as the Millennium Development Goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

7. There seems to be no durable solution to this problem in the near future. Indeed, the changing social economic condition, the poorly planned urbanization, the aging infrastructures and climate variability, points to a future where disasters could escalate and pose a serious threat to the world economy and its population, and particularly to the efforts developing countries are making to achieve sustainable development.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

8. It is in this context that in 2005, the Global Community, at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) agreed on the **Hyogo Framework for Action 9HFA) 2005-2015: building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters**, to expand and strengthen actions at all levels to reduce disaster risks. Prior to the HFA, regional actions were initiated to strengthen national capacities for Disaster Risk Reduction in Africa.
9. Under the leadership of the African Union and the Secretariat of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) with the support of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) and in partnership with UNDP, UNEP and the African Development Bank (AFDB), an **Africa Working Group for Disaster Risk Reduction** developed the African Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, produced guidelines for mainstreaming Disaster Risk Assessment into Development. In 2004, the working group prepared the Programme of Action 2005-2010, for the implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction.
10. The Africa Programme of Action 2005-2010 was discussed and adopted during the First Africa Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Addis Ababa in December 2005. The Programme of Action was subsequently endorsed by as decision of the Eight

Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union in Khartoum, Sudan in January 2006.

11. In line with the Hyogo Framework for Action and the African Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, in collaboration with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) Secretariat, launched the Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction as a forum for National Platforms and Focal Points.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

12. The Regional Platform is an institutional mechanism to ensure linkages between the Global Platform and the National Platforms. It provides a common forum for coordinated national participation in the Global Platform. The first session of the Africa Regional Platform took place in Nairobi in 2007; and the Second Session was also held in Nairobi in 2009. During this session, the Regional Platform submitted reports on its 2007-2009 consultative meetings, with recommendations to the Global Platform held in Geneva in June 2009.
13. Under the aegis of the African Union Commission, the Second session of the Africa Regional Platform for Disaster risk Reduction also discussed and agreed on an extended Programme of Action for the implementation of the African Regional Strategy for Disaster Reduction for the period 2006-2015, to align with the **Hyogo Framework for Action**.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

14. the Africa Programme of Action for 2006-2015 needs to be reviewed to be in tandem with other frameworks already agreed upon worldwide. This conference is. Therefore, timely as it intends to discuss the extended programme of Action for the implementation of the African Regional Strategy for Disaster Reduction for the period

2006-2015, with a view to aligning it with other global frameworks already agreed upon. The aligned strategy needs to be adopted at a ministerial level in order for it to be endorsed by the African Union summit before subsequent official promotion and application.

15. It is therefore, my hope that the discussions will be fruitful and a consensus arrived at for purposes of adopting it and forwarding to the African Union Summit.
16. Last but not least, I wish to point out that the Kenya Government has also developed a **National Disaster Policy** that is due to be approved and enacted into law. In addition, we have also developed a National Response Plan and a Fire Disaster Policy, both of which are in various stages of development.
17. Once enacted into law, these policies will assist the country have proper structures to stem disasters and in case they occur, there would be proper methods to respond to them. As a continent, we must begin to move away from waiting for disasters to happen, catching us poorly prepared and begin to invest more in disaster mitigation activities.
18. In conclusion, I want to encourage you to spare a bit of your time after the conference to appreciate the warm hospitality of the Kenyan people. Kenya has a wealth of fascinating physical features and amazing world-renowned wildlife. The Nairobi National Park and the National Museums of Kenya are only a stride from here. I am sure you will not regret the visit.
19. With these remarks, it is now my pleasure to declare this conference officially open.