

PRESS RELEASE

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AFRICA SEEKS UNITED POSITION ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

13 February 2013, ARUSHA – Representatives of 40 African States are gathering today for the 4th Africa Regional Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction to discuss Africa's position on a new global framework for disaster risk reduction amidst continuing concern over the ravages of climate change, drought, floods, heat-waves, wildfires and other natural hazards.

Figures released today by CRED* and UNISDR, the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, show that 18 million people were affected by drought last year and 8.8 million were affected by floods across sub-Saharan Africa. Economic losses from 147 recorded disasters over the last two years were \$1.3 billion.

In an unusual measure, five of Africa's Regional Economic Communities (ECOWAS, ECCAS, SADC, IGAD, EAC) are meeting today in Arusha to discuss the challenges and to develop a joint position on the new global framework for disaster risk reduction which will be agreed at the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction hosted by Japan in 2015. Africa's experience of implementing the existing Hyogo Framework for Action, the first global action plan for reducing disasters, will be widely debated during these three days.

Margareta Wahlström, UNISDR Chief and the UN Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, said: "Africa's economic growth is bringing opportunities and new investment. It has the highest rate of urbanization in the world. Half of Africa's population will live in cities and towns by 2050. Investment decisions which are being made now will determine the future of disaster risk across the continent.

"It is almost ten years since Africa first agreed on a regional strategy for disaster risk reduction. There have been striking successes at reducing the impact of major disaster events such as the current floods in Mozambique and the threatened major drought last year on the Horn of Africa but extreme weather events continue to remind us of Africa's vulnerability and exposure to natural hazards. Africa has an opportunity now to influence investment in disaster risk reduction and to influence considerably the outcome of the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015."

Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, African Union Commission, said: "This year the African Union is marking 50 years of existence. During this anniversary year disaster risk reduction will be given the highest priority and will be at the heart of our vision for the next 50 years. This is a direct response to the increasing

focus on these issues by governments and communities across Africa as we see more and more disaster events occurring.”

Africa’s governments and Regional Economic Communities will also be reporting on their progress in implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in May this year, hosted by UNISDR in Geneva.

For more information about UNISDR visit: www.unisdr.org

*Source: EM-DAT: the OFDA/CRED international Disaster Database

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