

**HER EXCELLENCY, THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA SPEECH ON THE  
OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR  
DISASTER REDUCTION 2019**

***THEME: “Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, among them health and educational facilities, including through developing their resilience by 2030”***

**Salutations:::::**

➤ **Fellow Gambians and Friends of the Gambia,**

On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of the Gambia, I take this opportunity to thank the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) on the occasion on the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction (IDDR 2019) which aims at promoting a global culture of disaster reduction, including disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness. It is an opportunity to acknowledge the progress being made toward reducing disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health.

The adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030 has marked a new era in global efforts to reduce disasters on lives and properties for poverty alleviation as per the SDGs. I have the firm conviction that the theme for this year theme (**Target D**): *“Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, among them health and education facilities, including through*

*developing their resilience by 2030;*” will significantly contribute to achieving the objectives and targets of the Sendai Framework.

➤ **Fellow Gambians and Friends of the Gambia,**

Since 2015, The Gambia has committed itself to invest in risk reduction through the improvement of government sectorial policies, enforcement and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that our national policy is supportive to the Sendai agenda. As a result, the current National Development Plan (2018-2021), has prioritized disaster risk reduction through a series of consultations with citizens, including vulnerable groups.

It is important to mention that the government is strengthening the DRR agenda and has prioritized the allocation of more resources to the country’s resiliency programmes, such as increasing budgetary allocations to DRR. This move intends to increase more community participation in awareness raising, simulation exercises, timely and easy dissemination of early warning information, building youths in disaster management and environmental sustainability. Through partnership with several groups such as the UN System, the government of the Gambia is supported in several areas that improve our capacity to reduce disaster.

➤ **Fellow Gambians and Friends of the Gambia,**

I would like to further mention the achievements made in the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030, which since the implementation and its reporting cycle has been met by the Gambia. The Gambia was among the first African countries to make the first reporting in 2018 of the Sendai Monitor on the seven global targets. These efforts have contributed immensely to reduction of disasters despite challenges.

The Gambia recently joins the rest of the world to do the second reporting for the year on October 1st through the support of stakeholders by providing data for respective indicators.

➤ **Fellow Gambians and Friends of the Gambia,**

According to the UN; the scale of insured economic losses over the three years since the Sendai Framework was launched has been increasing and remains a challenge. These three years are part of the top five of insured losses over the last thirty years; including the record breaking year of 2017. This came to \$135 billion bookmarked by \$50 billion in insured losses in 2016 and \$80 billion in 2018. Overall, the insurance industry estimates a direct economic loss during those three years comes to \$665 billion. A considerable proportion of those losses come from **infrastructure failures** in high-income countries. It is also worth noting that these years have coincided with new records

on global warming; the last five years have been the hottest years on record globally.

➤ **Fellow Gambians and Friends of the Gambia,**

The NDMA stands in solidarity with the 74,226 people affected by various hazards this year and causing huge destruction to some critical infrastructures in the country. Up to 12 people lost their lives mostly due to the severity of the various hazards including infrastructure. More than 3,769 households have lost part of their houses, 1,708 have completely lost their homes thus resulting to the displacement of 2778 people. Some public facilities such as four hospitals and six schools were affected and roads become no longer-motorable, bridges unusable and entire farmlands destroyed. This situation has definitely affected the quality of their lives and we at NDMA are working tirelessly to address the short and medium term needs of these people. Of all the destructions I have just mentioned, there is a national crisis of urbanization, illegal settlements and the lack of adherence to proper building plans with sub-standard infrastructures causing huge economic losses to the national GDP and at individual level increasing poverty.

➤ **Fellow Gambians and Friends of the Gambia,**

The Goal for this day year's celebration is to provide an advocacy platform to all governments, local governments, health and education authorities, disaster management agencies, UN agencies, NGOs, Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, civil

society groups, construction industry, insurance industry, academic and scientific institutions, and other interested groups to highlight the critical importance of building to last, with the engagement and consent of vulnerable groups especially in low and middle-income countries.

The main objectives of the year's celebration are to:

- Promote and encourage events at national and community level to mark implementation of the Sendai Framework with a focus on target (d);
- Highlight the impact of resilient critical infrastructure on human safety and well-being notably in the education and health spheres;
- Partner with the insurance industry to highlight what goes wrong with critical infrastructure when it is not risk informed;
- Highlight global analysis of the state of critical infrastructure;

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Despite all these achievements, the NDMA still faces numerous challenges in terms of resources to implement its programs in achieving the national and international frameworks in the wake of reducing the impacts of disasters of all forms. In the reporting of the Sendai Framework, the NDMA is facing huge challenges in the data harmonization with key partners which undermines the country's commitment in addressing disasters both locally

and internationally. I would urge the stakeholders to support the NDMA in its coordination role and to continue supporting the agency in order to achieve our collective goals as far as disaster is concerned.

➤ **Fellow Gambians and Friends of the Gambia,**

Finally, on behalf of the Government and People of the Gambia, I would like to express our sincere thanks to the UNDP, WFP and Child Fund International The Gambia for their support in making this day a reality in the Gambia.

**Happy International Day for Disaster Reduction to everyone. Thank you for joining us.**