**Official Statement by H.E. Mr. ArmenYeritsyan,**

**Minister of Emergency Situations of Armenia,**

**at the Fourth Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction,**

**May 2013, Geneva**

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen!

Let me congratulate us all for the participation in the Fourth Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, which is a great opportunity to establish new cooperation mechanisms, to share best practices, to obtain and provide information on new initiatives and international developments in the disaster risk reduction (DRR) area and just simply interact and make new acquaintances.

As a UN member State, in 2005 Armenia joined the *Hyogo Framework for Action*(HFA) and since then the Armenian Government has taken decisive steps to implement the HFA and in particular, to integrate disaster risk reduction into the development policies and programs recognizing it as the nation safety priority.

In particular:

1. In 2010, following the Armenian Government Decree the *National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction* was drawn up, which aims to establish a multi-sector mechanism for disaster risk reduction in Armenia with the involvement of all stakeholders.

2. In 2012, the Armenian Government approved the *National Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction*, which aims to build a disaster-resilient State securing a gradual increase in individual and public safety and sustainable development. The formulation of the Strategy was based on the Armenia Sustainable Development Program and the *HFA* priorities. Significant achievements have already been noted after the adoption of the Strategy, specifically, the Ministries integrated disaster risk reduction as a development component into their development programs for 2012-2020.

3. Integration of disaster risk reduction into community development plans is the next important line of action, and to pursue it regional DRR committees have already been set up, which are consultative bodies for the implementation of the DRR strategy and HFA at the local level. Heads of regional branches of the Rescue Service were appointed by my order as HFA coordinators. The reporting on the HFA implementation progress is done through two channels: governmental and non-governmental ones.

4. The unified *Local level risk management* methodology, which is implemented with the immediate participation of the community and is a tool aimed at community risks identification and management was adapted and tested.

5. Four cities – Yerevan, Kapan, Alaverdi and Gyumri joined the “Making Cities Resilient: My City is Getting Ready” Global Disaster Risk Reduction Campaign making a commitment to undertake 10 steps to make cities safe. We will continuously increase the number of participating cities and we will apply the ‘sister-city’ collaborative format to promote the culture of cooperation and experience-sharing among the various countries’ cities that have joined the campaign.

6. Within the framework of the *National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction* and with UNDP and UNISDR support Armenia joined the *Mainstreaming Adaptation and Climate Change into Development* (MADRiD) program, where cooperation has already been started with the involvement of relevant specialists from the Ministries of Emergency Situations, Nature Protection, Economy, Finance and Territorial Administration.

7. In 2010-2012, a large-scale and targeted process was launched to establish a Crisis Management Center. With the support from the RoA Government, UNDP, BCPR, SDC and other partners, considerable funds were allocated to the Crisis Management Center for the purpose of technical and technological upgrade, information processing and registration, disaster risks management, etc.

8. The 911 service for provision of urgent and coordinated help to people was put into operation in 2012. Within just one year the number of phone calls exceeded 1,300,000, which is more than the number of phone calls to all other operational services combined. It is evidence of consistent and conscious efforts and of public confidence already gained and sustained.

9. We pay close attention to recruiting and gender policy. 49 percent of employees in the Center are women. Another important initiative is provision of employment for persons with disabilities. So far 20 persons with disabilities have been enrolled into the Crisis Management Center and the 911 service.

10. In 2010-2012 DRR education programs were designed and introduced into pre-school institutions as well as into elementary and secondary schools with the support from the UN Children’s Fund. The implementation of such education programs aims to develop a culture of safety. In 2012, a DRR plan for general-education schools was formulated with the UNICEF support within the framework of the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction with the goal of creating disaster-resilient schools. According to that plan, the school DRR plan involves students, representatives of parents and officials from local self-government bodies.

11. Medium urban search and rescue teams are being set up in the city of Yerevan and in Shirak and Syunik regions in conformity with the INSARAG (International Search and Rescue Advisory Group) standards. The INSARAG methodology has been adopted for undertaking rescue activities, and training in the State Academy for Crisis Management is provided in line with that methodology. Close attention is paid to disaster medicine.

12. Within the past two years we shared our experience in disaster risk management with the representatives of 25 countries and numerous international organizations who visited the Armenian Ministry of Emergency Situations to that end.

The major prerequisite for those achievements is political will. At present the Armenian Government is well aware that the formation and development of an efficient disaster risk management system in the country with the involvement of all sectors of the economy and broad sections of the public is a most important factor for ensuring the country’s development. ***No single entity can hold a monopoly over disaster risk management in the State***. Disaster risk management requires proactive and direct involvement of all entities of the country as well as of local and international organizations. I should also stress the important fact that the above-mentioned achievements would not have been possible within such a short period of time without close cooperation with and support from UNDP, BCPR, UNISDR, Word VisionArmenia, UNICEF, Armenian Red Cross Society, OXFAM, SDC and other organizations in recent years. This cooperation gave our country an opportunity to explore, understand, introduce and develop the culture of disaster risk management. We stand ready to continue this cooperation and to participate actively in the post-HFA discussions and possible developments because we are sure that the implementation of the HFA should be taken further on and the five priority areas for action should be retained. It is against this background that we suggest that the mechanisms for sharing best practices be developed since that will give an opportunity to compare the models, methodologies, professional capacities and mechanisms designed and adapted in various countries and to get integrated in a more constructive way into the post-HFA developments. We need to recognize that the HFA implementation is much more than merely a program. It is clearly an opportunity to become aware of and to see the disaster risks that exist in our countries and their interrelation with development processes, to stimulate international cooperation and the processes of sharing best practices, knowledge, specialists, methods, etc. and to contribute to regional cooperation. Finally, it is yet another opportunity to restore and **to carry out the humanity’s most important mission of living in balance with nature and of making our world much safer.**

Thank you!

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