



STATEMENT BY H.E. TAN YEE WOAN, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SINGAPORE TO THE UNITED NATIONS, AT THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE GLOBAL PLATFORM ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION, ON 23 MAY 2013, CENTRE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE GENEVE (CICG)

[Mr Chairperson]

Excellencies

Distinguished Delegates

There is no shortage of recent catastrophic natural and man-made disasters to remind all countries of the need to be vigilant and enhance their national resilience to disasters. Singapore is a small island city-state of about 700 square km and a population of over 5 million, making us one of the most densely populated countries in the world. While Singapore is relatively free from natural calamities, we are not spared from urban hazards, man-made disasters and terrorist-related threats. Our high population density also increases the risk of huge losses of lives and damage to infrastructure, equipment and property should any disaster, natural or man-made, occur. Singapore thus sees disaster risk reduction or DRR as crucial to our security, social and economic well being as well as long-term sustainable development.

The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 (HFA) has provided an important and useful framework to help strengthen national and international resilience towards disasters. Since 2009 when we submitted our national progress report on our implementation of the HFA, Singapore has continued with our efforts to reduce our vulnerability to disasters and to increase our ability to cope with disasters should they occur. We support the UNISDR's efforts in leading international discussions on how the post-2015 global strategy for DRR could be shaped in the lead-up to the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction scheduled in 2015 in Japan.

Singapore believes that one of the keys to an effective DRR strategy is to have an effective governance framework, which must be underpinned by three elements. First, there must be **proper planning and regulations which are diligently enforced**. For example, in Singapore, building codes are strictly established and enforced, and regular checks are conducted to inspect the structural and fire safety of buildings.

Second, to ensure a comprehensive and coherent response to disasters, it is necessary to adopt **an integrated approach to DRR across government agencies, led and coordinated by clearly established focal points**. In Singapore, the Singapore Civil Defence Force or SCDF is responsible for coordinating the inter-agency response to mitigate the impact of disasters. The SCDF conducts regular emergency exercises and enforces fire safety requirements in buildings. It also oversees the construction of civil defence shelters as well as the public warning and alert system.

Third, **community preparedness should be enhanced through public education and awareness programmes**. Individuals can better cope with disasters if they are prepared. As our National Emergency response authority, the SCDF conducts a public education programme which provides both theory and practical training in first aid, cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, fire safety, casualty evacuation, emergency procedures and unconventional threats. It also engages the private sector closely to exercise regulatory control over the import, storage and transport of petroleum and flammable materials.

Disasters are extremely costly on at least two levels. At one level, they are costly because of the loss of lives and the injuries, sufferings and hardships which individuals and societies must endure. At another level, they are costly in terms of the economic costs due to damage to infrastructure, equipment and property, and the ensuing rehabilitation and rebuilding costs. Hence, while not all disasters can be prevented despite our best efforts, prevention and preparedness must nevertheless be accorded high importance from both social and economic perspectives. Singapore has been sharing our experience in disaster management with other countries through either the Singapore

Cooperation Programme (SCP) or the Third Country Programmes which are jointly hosted with developed countries and international organisations such as the US, Japan and the Commonwealth Secretariat. Singapore also participates in the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) system and the Asia-Pacific Humanitarian Partnership (APHP) and has deployed officers for operations such as in the Philippines in the aftermath of Typhoon Bopha. Singapore also works closely with regional countries through the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) and is part of Central Task Force of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA).

[Mr Chairperson]

Singapore supports efforts aimed at enhancing national, regional and international disaster risk reduction. We therefore appreciate the opportunity that the Global Platform presents for facilitating these efforts in an inclusive, consultative and integrated way.

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