

**Government of Malawi**

**STATEMENT BY THE**

**DIRECTOR FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT AFFAIRS, MR JAMES M. K. CHIUSIWA**

**AT THE**

**FOURTH SESSION OF THE GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

**GENEVA, SWITZERLAND, 19-23 MAY 2013**

The Chairperson;

The UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs;

The UN Assistant Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction;

Your Excellencies;

Dear Colleagues;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Malawi is exposed to different disasters that have had far-reaching consequencies on the socio-economic growth of the country. Climate change, poverty, population pressure, environmental degradation and over-reliance on rainfed agriculture, amogst others expose households at a higher risk of disaster impacts. The common disasters include droughts, floods, stormy rains, strong winds, hailstorms, earthquakes and disease epidemics. A lot of resources are being spent to provide relief assitance to households affected by disasters every year. For instance, the food insecurity situation that Malawi faced in 2012/2013, costed more than 65 million United States Dollars and response to disasters since December 2012 has costed the Malawi Government more than 1 million US$. In response to this, the government has developed and launched the “Resilience Strategy for Food Security” with the help of the UN, looking at how to break the recurring cycle of food insecurity due to weather events in certain districts and build the resilience of the vulnerable population.

A number of measures are underway to ensure that households and communities that are exposed to disaster risks are protected. The country has just finalized the development of a disaster risk management policy, which is aligned to the Hyogo Framework for Action, the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Regional Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy. The policy provides for institutional arrangements for disaster risk management to emphasize the paradigm shift from disaster management to managing disaster risks, which includes eleven multi-stakeholder technical sub-committees that focus on critical issues in disaster risk management. The policy has identified the following six policy priority areas which the country will focus on in the next five years:

1. Mainstreaming disaster risk management into sustainable development;
2. Establishment of a comprehensive system for disaster risk identification, assessment and monitoring;
3. Development and strengthening of a people-centred early warning system;
4. Promotion of a culture of safety, and adoption of resilience-enhancing interventions;
5. Reduction of underlying risks; and
6. Strengthening preparedness capacity for effective response and recovery.

A National Platform for Disaster Risk Management was launched in February 2013 by the Vice President of of the Republic of Malawi and held its first meeting in March 2013. The National Platform will ensure the proper coordination of all disaster risk management stakeholders in the country. In order to provide an enabling legal framework for the implementation of disaster risk management following the new policy, the existing Disaster Preparedness and Relief Act of 1991, which focuses only on disaster preparedness and response is undergoing review. A draft Disaster Risk Management Bill has been developed and consultations are currenty underway. The plan is that the Disaster Risk Management Bill should be passed into law by the end of 2013.

In order to reduce and mitigate the impacts of disasters amongst communities, the Government of Malawi, in collaboration with civil society organisations and other partners, has been implementing the following activities in disaster prone areas:

* Dredging and excavation of silted rivers;
* Promotion of drought insurance at micro-level;
* Integration of disaster risk management into secondary school and primary school curricula.
* Establishing community based early warning systems for floods;
* Afforestation of river banks, catchment areas and bare hills;
* Supporting livelihoods initiatives to assist households affected by floods, dry spells and other disasters recovery from the impacts of the disasters;
* Promotion of ‘build back better and safer’ principles to households affected by disasters through construction of demonstration houses and provision of support;
* Establishment of small scale irrigation projects in drought prone areas;
* Development and review of national and district contingency plans;
* Construction of dykes along rivers which flood annually; and
* Building capacity of disaster risk management stakeholders and structures.

In its efforts to implement disaster risk reduction, Malawi has faced a number of challenges. Some of them include the following:

* Inadequate funding for disaster risk reduction;
* Lack of comprehensive risk assessment and hazard mapping;
* Lack of an effective integrated early warning system; and
* Lack of mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into development planning.

As a way of implementing the priority areas identified in the National Disaster Risk Management Policy, the Government of Malawi will, among others, undertake the following activities in the next five years:

1. **Develop comprehensive multi-hazard risk maps for the country.**

The development of these maps would be the basis for developing appropriate interventions to address disaster risks in different areas.

1. **Develop an efficient, effective integrated people-centred national early warning system.**

Working with the Ministry of Water Development and Irrigation, the Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services and other agencies responsible for generating early warning information, an integrated people-centred early warning system will be established.

1. **Work with universities and colleges to develop short and long-term courses in disaster risk management and support the integration of disaster risk management in the school curriculum**.

The inclusion of disaster risk management in the secondary school curricula has been done while work has started on the primary school curricula. However, the need for trained personnel to manage disaster risk reduction programmes within the country can only be realized if relevant courses are offerred in tertiary institutions.

1. **Focus on urban vulnerability and disaster risks.**

For quite some time, disaster risk reduction interventions have targeted rural areas. However, Malawi has, of late, experienced disasters in urban areas such as floods, fires and collapse of buildings that have demonstrated the need to focus on urban vulnerability to disaster risks.

1. **Implement a small grants scheme, focusing on community based DRR initiatives.**

The grants scheme will target local based Non Governmental Organizations and Community Based Organizations that will implement low-cost but large-impact DRR projects at community level with active involvement of the targeted communities.

1. **Development of a database of baseline data for disaster prone areas and support linkages between DRM related information databases.**

The baseline data will improve the state of preparedness in terms of data which is required during disaster assessments

**Post Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA)**

Although efforts have been made in implementing disaster risk reduction initiatives which address the HFA priorities for action, the Government of Malawi is of the view that there is still more that needs to be done in the country to address disaster risks and strengthen preparedness for effective response to disasters. As such, Malawi is recommending that the period for the implementation of the HFA be extended.

**I thank you all.**