

ISDR GLOBAL PLATFORM

Second Session

Address by

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Honourable Chairperson,
Distinguished Delegates from different countries,
Representatives from UN agencies
Members from the media,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning/ Good Afternoon to all

Bangladesh is one of the high risk disaster prone countries of the world which facing multiple hazards like Flood, Cyclone, River Bank Erosion, Earthquake, Landslide, Drought and Salinity almost in every year. The country is also highly vulnerable to climate change. Moreover, the country is densely populated by 150 million people, 40 percent of them are categorized as poor.

Bangladesh has long history of community based disaster management programme. The resilience of people of Bangladesh against disaster is also acclaimed by world community. The people of Bangladesh have a tradition and records of living with various hazards. Credit goes to the community people of Bangladesh who have faced disaster having indigenous coping mechanism and developed their resilience against disasters.

Cyclone preparedness programme (CPP) of Bangladesh is one of the best practices for the world to learn. The CPP was introduced in our country in 1966 by the league of Red Cross and after liberation our great leader Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman took step to run the programme with government support alongwith the then Bangladesh Red Cross Society (Presently the Red Crescent Society). Still the programme is going on with 42 thousand volunteers in the 11 coastal districts of the country. The afforestation programme in the coastal belt of the country was also introduced in 1972-1973 under the dynamic leadership of the Father of the Nation. Both the programmes played a valuable role to save the human lives and resources from the affect of cyclone and other natural disasters. In course of time, Bangladesh took various preparatory measures like building up of cyclone and flood shelter, embankment, killa (shelter for cattle during tidal surge and floods) and introduce various institutional mechanism to ensure better preparedness, search and rescue operation and mitigation measures. Standing Orders on Disasters (SOD) is a valid policy document of unique example which laid down the responsibilities of the various ministries of the governments, people representatives, development partners, INGOs, NGOs, members of the national, district and local level disaster management committees and member of the civil society. The SOD was introduced in 1997 under the guidance of the then and present Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and it is working very effectively to run the total disaster management activities of the country.

As a signatory of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) in 2005, the government of Bangladesh renew its commitment that disaster management is one of the prior areas of action and the government gave due emphasis on professionalising the disaster management, mainstreaming disaster risk reduction, strengthening early warning system, supporting food security, community adaptation to climate risk and enhancement of community resilience. Already we have submitted the progress report HFA to ISDR. We experienced that the poorer of the poor are the most vulnerable and worst victims to natural disasters. Realizing the essential needs of the poorer people the government introduced social safety net programmes for upgrading their living

condition and livelihood through programmes like vulnerable group feeding (VGF), vulnerable group development (VGD), test relief (TR), food for works (FFW) etc.

The cyclone Sidr 2007 was a great learning for us. Due to preparedness and risk reduction interventions it was possible for us to reduce the loss of lives and resources. 3400 persons killed by cyclone Sidr, while the figure was 138000 in 1991. We recently affected by cyclone Aila on 25 May, 2009 which caused loss of 190 lives and huge resources.

The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has, therefore, total commitment towards the reduction of human, economic and environmental costs of disasters by enhancing overall disaster management capacity. Further, efforts have been continuing for optimum coordination and best utilization of resources alongwith ensuring community involvement so that they are aware of what they can do for protecting their lives and properties against disasters. The planning and disaster management activities, however, conducted by the GoB agencies involve preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation as keynotes for building up self-reliance of the community people.

Considering the need for legal framework of disaster management, we are in the final stage of enacting National Disaster Management Act, which is under the process of approval by the cabinet. A National Plan for Disaster Management has been prepared which will be implemented by 2015 in line with HFA commitment. Standing Orders on Disasters (SoD) and Allocation of Business for the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management has been updated considering the current national, regional and global disaster management priorities.

Recently we have changed traditional sea-port focused signal system and converted it as people friendly. In addition disaster messages have been developed so that people can understand their role under the circumstances of declared signal. Flood Forecasting and Warning Center (FFWC) under the Water Development Board has developed a mechanism to disseminate flood warning before ten days of flood. This will be helpful in reducing the risks in agriculture sector. Establishment of Disaster Management Information Center (DMIC) has created a new opportunity of information sharing having the network with all districts and 232 upazilas (Sub-district). Recently we have completed the seasonal employment creation project as part of community resilience and social safety intervention which will be followed by a more comprehensive and revised phase.

The Ministry of Food and Disaster Management has been working with the close collaboration of the Ministry of Environment for addressing climate risks. A Climate Change Cell has been established in the Department of Environment under the framework of the Comprehensive Disaster Management Program of the government. The Government of Bangladesh has allocated a fund of US\$ 45 million for Climate Risk Adaptation.

Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh has been identified as the highest vulnerable city to earthquake in the world. Seismic hazards maps have been developed for major cities and equipment for emergency search and rescue operation were handed over to the Armed Force Division and the Department of Fire Service and Civil Defense. Initiative has been taken to form urban volunteers as part of strengthening community preparedness.

The Ministry of Food and Disaster Management is promoting public-private partnership in disaster management and maintaining close collaboration with all development partners, INGOs, NGOs and civil society.

Although we have taken various pragmatic programmes in disaster management still we have long way to go to reduce the overall vulnerability of the people. A mentionable people of our country are living under the poverty line, still they are most vulnerable to disaster. Our government is trying hard with limited resources to ensure overall development of the country but recurrent disasters hindered our development efforts. Here, the world community, development partners and INGOs can contribute in our disaster management programmes to reduce disaster risks and vulnerabilities.

I hope the findings of the second session of ISDR Global Platform will enrich our Disaster risk reduction efforts. I, on behalf of Bangladesh, congratulate UN-ISDR for organizing this important and historic event.

Thank you very much for your patient hearing.

Long live Bangladesh

Long live UN-ISDR.