



República Democrática de Timor-Leste
Gabinete do Vice-Primeiro Ministro

***Statement by HE Vice-Prime Minister at Geneva International Conference on
Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction 16-19 June 2009***

Honorable Mr. UNSG, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Government of Timor-Leste, allow me first of all to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the UN-ISDR for inviting Timor-Leste to attend this very important event. Similar to many other countries, Timor-Leste is highly vulnerable to disasters. Timor-Leste's human and national security, recovery and development has recently been challenged by a significant crisis of internal conflict. Protracted and worsening human and national security vulnerabilities over recent years require the Government, communities and partners to strengthen community resilience to both disasters and conflict crisis. Whilst oil and gas revenue offers a positive economic outlook for recovery, given the poor state of the environment and the continued dramatic rate of degradation and the forecast impact of climate change, Timor-Leste has to invest more in disaster preparedness, mitigation and prevention initiatives.

Excellencies,

The Timorese Government attaches great importance to disaster risk reduction and has begun to include it in national development plans. Although the country is facing significant economic and social development challenges, the government is committed to pushing ahead with disaster risk reduction. We are aware that disasters are common challenges faced by all, that disaster risk reduction calls for joint efforts and close cooperation of the international community. As a fledgling nation, Timor-Leste faces many difficulties to elevate and maintain disaster risk reduction as a priority. We have many urgent priorities, and so we need support to push forward with disaster risk reduction. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the various international donors that have supported our efforts in disaster risk management since 2002, and remind them that it is still very early days for us on this particular journey.

Since the restoration of its independence in 2002, Timor-Leste has developed and adopted a number of policies and strategies in disaster risk reduction. In 2007, the Timorese Government formulated and adopted the "National Disaster Risk Management Policy" setting strategic goals for national disaster risk reduction. The Policy covers: a necessary shift in managing disasters from a traditional manner – emergency assistance or crisis management – to disaster, conflict and climate change risk reduction strategies;

the general framework and activities of disaster risk management; integration and mainstreaming of disaster, conflict, climate change and adaptability across all sectors through economic, social and environmental national recovery and development; a focus on strengthening community capacities and reducing vulnerabilities; integration of a gender perspectives; the need for attention to be given to children and youth in disaster risk management; and disaster management structure at all levels: national, district, sub-district and village levels. Guided by the National Disaster Risk Management Policy, governments at all levels have to incorporate disaster risk reduction into their overall development planning, with the aim of striking a balance between the development of mankind and nature, giving disaster risk reduction an important status as the basis of national development blueprints. The Timorese Government also promulgated and implemented the National Reintegration and Early Recovery Policies.

In an effort to strengthen leadership in disaster risk reduction, the Government of Timor-Leste set up the National Disaster Management Committee comprised of all relevant ministers, and further improved its disaster risk management system featuring guidance and coordination by the Government, division of labour and responsibilities among departments, civil society organisations and local communities. To cope with natural disaster and human-induced disasters, we have developed various contingency plans, namely the National Contingency Plan for Drought, National Contingency Plan for Conflict Situations and National Contingency Plan for Flood Situations; to ensure the effective implementation of emergency response. We regularly organize consultations with all actors and communities and strengthen our coordination mechanisms in disaster response preparedness. When disaster occurs, relevant government departments, civil society organisations and international aid organisations should share information, consult each other and take coordinated actions. We have prepared necessary infrastructure such as warehousing, disaster relief materials and food items to respond to the needs if disaster occurs.

Timor-Leste is highly prone to disasters and it cannot afford to tackle all problems caused by disaster alone; we also need external assistance. It is important that the Government of Timor-Leste builds on the modes of cooperation and exchange that have been developed with other countries in disaster risk reduction.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Within its development process, Timor-Leste is facing enormous challenges ahead in disaster risk reduction. In the years to come we intend to fully implement the principles and the priority actions as set out in the Hyogo Framework of Action 2005-2015, to enhance the nation's capacity in disaster risk reduction, to strive to foster harmonious and safe social environments, and to facilitate the healthy development of the economy.

We shall actively push forward with drafting of disaster risk reduction plans by relevant government departments at the central and local levels, strengthen capacity building at all levels of the government, and take various measures in incorporating disaster risk

reduction for the sustainable development of the society. We shall also carry out a nationwide survey on disaster risk reduction capacity, bringing into perspective the current status of local disaster risk reduction capacity in different districts, identifying the shortfall of needs, with a view to provide solid basis for decision making local governments and relevant government departments in initiating and implementing economic and social development plans and policies.

We shall improve and strengthen the capacity of our disaster operation centers at national and local levels to monitor and to gather information on disaster situations across the country. We shall set up our contingency assistance system for disasters to fully enhance comprehensive coordination in disaster prevention and response and further, we shall set up a disaster contingency response system back by comprehensive coordination, information sharing and technological support to raise de overall disaster handling capacity and the level of management. We shall strengthen the capacity of disaster management structure at all levels including community structure in disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness. The Timorese Government will continue to strengthen cooperation and exchanges in disaster risk reduction with other countries, international and regional agencies and NGOs. We are ready to cooperate with all parties concerned in disaster risk reduction information exchanges and work toward reducing disasters.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Asia is a vast area with a very large population and complex climatic, geological and geographical conditions. Frequent disasters often result in great human and material losses. It is a common aspiration of all governments and peoples to enhance our ability to cope with disaster risks and lessen disaster losses. Let us join our hands to further strengthen exchanges and cooperation and make new contributions to effectively mitigating disasters and achieving economic and social development.

Thank You.