

**Government of Malawi**

**STATEMENT BY THE**

**SECRETARY AND COMMISSIONER FOR DISASTER MANAGEMENT AFFAIRS, MRS LILLIAN D. NG’OMA**

**AT THE**

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

**GENEVA, SWITZERLAND, 16-19 JUNE 2009**

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, just like any other country in the world, experiences different types of disasters. The common disasters include floods, drought, heavy storms and strong winds, hailstorms, epidemics and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. These disasters affect many households every year leading to loss of household property, livelihoods and damage to crops and infrastructure. They thus seriously disrupt development gains.

The Government of Malawi is prioritizing disaster risk reduction in order to reduce the impact of disasters on communities in the country. In order to effectively coordinate disaster risk reduction activities, the Government of Malawi established a legal and institutional framework for disaster risk reduction. The framework includes the following:

* *Enactment of the Disaster Preparedness and Relief Act in 1991;*
* *Establishment of the Department of Disaster Management Affairs in the Office of the President and Cabinet –* The Department of Disaster Management Affairs is responsible for coordinating disaster risk reduction programmes at national level. At district level, the District Assembly coordinates disaster risk reduction programmes under the leadership of the District Commissioner;
* *Establishment of the National Disaster Preparedness and Relief Committee -* The committee provides policy directions in the implementation of disaster risk reduction programmes. It comprises Principal Secretaries of all line ministries and departments and representatives of 3-5 Non Governmental Organisations; and
* *Establishment of Civil Protection Committees at district, area and village level* – The District Commissioner coordinates disaster risk reduction programmes at district, area and village levels through these committees.

For the effective realization of disaster risk reduction in Malawi as per the Hyogo Framework for Action, Malawi is focusing on bringing all the relevant stakeholders on board and ensuring that there is a common understanding of disaster risk reduction. Sensitization meetings on disaster risk reduction have, therefore, been and continue to be undertaken at different levels. At community level, the sensitization has focused on communities in disaster prone areas in order to build understanding and awareness of disaster risk in their communities. This has resulted in some communities staying in low-lying flood prone areas to relocate upland to avoid being affected by floods every year.

As a way to ensure the effective coordination of disaster preparedness, response and recovery activities, Malawi is in the process of developing Operational Guidelines for Disaster Risk Management. The Operational Guidelines specify roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery for different hazards. A draft is now in place. It is hoped that the Guidelines will contribute towards avoiding duplication of efforts and ensuring effective utilization of scarce resources.

Malawi currently has an old draft of a Disaster Risk Reduction Policy. This has created a challenge in the effective coordination of disaster risk reduction programmes. It is, therefore, planned that a process to finalise the development of the policy will start as soon as the development of the Operational Guidelines has been completed.

Malawi has also been focusing on strengthening disaster preparedness for effective response to disasters, especially floods. Since 2003, flood prone districts have been assisted to develop flood contingency plans. Although not all flood prone districts have as of now developed the plans, good progress is being made. At national level, since 2006, Malawi has been developing a National Contingency Plan with involvement of all relevant stakeholders. The process is led by the Government.

In its efforts to implement disaster risk reduction, Malawi has faced a number of challenges. Some of them are as follows:

* Inadequate funding for disaster risk reduction;
* Lack of capacity in disaster risk reduction at national, district and community levels;
* Lack of a disaster risk reduction policy;
* Lack of an effective integrated early warning system;
* Lack of mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into development programmes and plans due to lack of understanding.

As a way forward, the Government of Malawi would like to focus on the following:

* Develop a disaster risk reduction policy;
* Ensure that ministries, departments and District Assemblies budget for disaster risk reduction activities;
* Build capacity, through training, in disaster risk reduction at national, district and community levels;
* Establish a national platform for disaster risk reduction;
* Continue sensitization of stakeholders in disaster risk reduction; and
* Undertake hazard and risk assessment in the country.

In conclusion, Malawi remains committed to implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action despite the challenges being experienced.

**I thank you all.**