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Regional Achievements and Challenges in Implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action: Africa's Perspective by **Dr. Abebe Haile Gabriel**,
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Session: "Progress in Achieving a Substantial Reduction in Disaster Losses: Global and Regional Perspectives"

Mr. Chairman, Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to be here with you in Geneva at this Second Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. On behalf of the African Union member states, I wish to express our appreciation for the opportunity given to us to report the regional achievements and challenges in implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action. As you know, disasters are a recurrent threat to Africa, and vulnerability to risks and disasters in Africa is significant. Climate Variability and Change is also taking its toll on Africa causing more emergencies in food security, health and various other economic sectors. It is of utmost importance to reduce disaster risks across the continent and I am delighted to share with you the progress that has been made in Africa towards Disaster Risk Reduction.

The AU Commission, in collaboration with NEPAD Secretariat, African Development Bank, and support of the UNISDR, UNDP and UNEP, developed in 2004 the "Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction" and the "Guidelines for Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Assessment in Development". The Africa Regional Strategy was adopted by the African Ministerial Conference of Environment (AMCEN) and subsequently endorsed by the AU Assembly. Similarly, the "Africa Programme of Action on DRR for the period 2006 to 2010" was adopted by the "First Africa Ministerial Conference on

DRR” that was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2005, which again was endorsed by the AU Summit in early 2006.

In line with both the Hyogo Framework for Action and the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, the African Union Commission, in collaboration with the UNISDR Regional Office for Africa, launched the Africa Regional Platform for DRR in 2007 as a coordination forum, and as an institutional setup to link between the Global Platform and the National Platforms.

More recently, in May 2009, we organised the second Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Nairobi, Kenya. This meeting reviewed progress made in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, promoted regional cooperation and strengthened regional mechanisms and programmes in Africa. In addition, the Africa Regional Platform participants agreed on extending the Africa Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Africa Strategy for DRR to cover the period until 2015 with some modifications, in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action. Please allow me to highlight some of the key aspects of the extended programme:

- Mainstreaming risk reduction management and climate change adaptation as an integrated part of sustainable development and related programmes
- Strengthening national mechanisms, legal frameworks and capacities for mainstreaming and implementing DRR strategies and programmes
- Translating policies and strategies and practical tools for decision makers and practitioners to facilitate implementation of the Africa strategy, programme of action and the HFA.

The African regional platform has also proposed operational and progress tracking mechanisms for implementation and monitoring at regional, sub-regional and national level, including the identification of key indicators for success.

This document will now be tabled before the AU Ministerial meeting and the relevant AU decision organs for consideration. The Second Africa Regional Platform on Disaster

Risk Reduction was, therefore, an important step in the African continent's ongoing commitment to the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action and the Africa Regional Strategy.

The African Union Commission has also been continuously promoting the rolling out of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction to its Member States. At the recent Third Special Session of The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) that was held in Nairobi in May 2009, Disaster Risk Reduction as well as the Hyogo Framework for Action was successfully promoted, as a result of which the "Nairobi Declaration on the African Process for Combating Climate Change" urge African countries to accelerate implementation of the Africa regional strategy for DRR and HFA including risk monitoring observation, early warning, risk assessment, preparedness, emergency response and post-disaster recovery as an integral part of development and sectoral planning for climate change adaptation.

There are also notable achievements made at sub-regional level. The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has developed a Sub-Regional Strategy for Disaster Reduction and its related programme on Disaster Risk Reduction. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) approved its Sub-Regional Common Policy and has recently established the Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee on DRR. The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) has revised its sub-regional disaster management strategy, factoring in disaster risk reduction, and plans to get endorsement from its member states. The Economic Community of Central Africa States (ECCAS) has developed a sub-regional strategy and plan of action and now in a process of implementation.

At national level, African countries have made concrete progress in setting up institutions, policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction. National capacity has been enhanced through establishment of National Platforms or a nationally-owned and led, multi-stakeholder forum or committees. This is the principal coordination mechanism for mainstreaming DRR into development policies, planning and programmes. At

present, 25 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have either National Platforms or similar coordinating mechanisms. A status report on DRR in SSA, based on official national, sub-regional and regional reports, has been prepared by UNISDR Regional Office for Africa and will be published soon. The report informs and analyses the progress made with respect to each priority of the HFA and corresponding indicators, and contains country profiles and set of recommendation on the way forward.

Although Africa has made such concrete progress at regional, sub regional and national levels, a lot however remains to be desired in terms of available capacities and resources necessary for implementation of these policies, and translate political commitment into actions in a manner that disaster risk reduction could be well mainstreamed into development planning, programmes and activities.

Lastly, I would like to emphasise the importance of global partnership and collaboration to reduce Disaster Risks. At the Second Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction held last May in Nairobi, Kenya, a number of recommendations were adopted, which I would liked to share with you as attachment to this statement as time does not permit.

Before I conclude I would like to seize this opportunity to thank the ISDR Regional Office for Africa for supporting DRR efforts in Africa. I thank you.

Recommendations of the Second Session of the Africa Regional Platform to the Second Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

The Second Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR):

Recognising that Africa is highly vulnerable to natural hazards, and in particular to hydro-meteorological and geological hazards, the impacts of which are exacerbated by poverty, conflicts, urbanisation, epidemics, pest and insect infestations, and environmental pressures;

Also recognising that the impacts of climate variability and climate change amplify these challenges, increasing disaster risks for poor and vulnerable groups;

Aware of the specific vulnerabilities and risks faced by small island developing states (SIDS) in Africa;

Acknowledging that Disaster Risk Reduction is a strategic development issue, given that perennial disasters are gravely hindering Africa's efforts towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);

Affirming that Disaster Risk Reduction is an effective tool for reducing vulnerability and increasing resilience of countries and communities to natural hazards in Africa;

Informed of the progress made in the implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy and the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) at regional, sub-regional and national levels since the First Session of the Global Platform, with substantive information shared during this event and documented in the 2009 version of the Africa Status Report on Disaster Risk Reduction;

Noting that national governments, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the African Union Commission (AUC), United Nations agencies, civil society organisations and other ISDR system partners in Africa have made concrete progress in setting up institutional frameworks, strengthening policies, and implementing programmes, projects and activities related to Disaster Risk Reduction since the First Session of the Global Platform;

Conscious that gaps, needs and challenges still exist in the region, particularly in terms of weaknesses in early warning systems, inadequate coordination, and insufficient capacities and resources to translate policies and frameworks into practical tools and programmes for effective reduction of vulnerabilities and disaster impacts at national and community levels, in line with the Africa Regional Strategy and the Hyogo Framework for Action;

Recommends that:

1. National governments in Africa, with the support of regional and sub-regional inter-governmental organisations, technical institutions and international organisations, should

integrate Disaster Risk Reduction into their development policies and planning processes, as well as into emergency response and recovery activities;

2. Funding should be mobilised from donors and partners, such as the World Bank's Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), in order to implement Disaster Risk Reduction measures within programmes for poverty-reduction, sustainable development and climate change adaptation;
3. In complex situations, post-conflicts and post-disasters, disaster risk reduction and conflict sensitivity approaches should be integrated into plans and programmes, to reduce both vulnerabilities to disasters and the probability of resurgence of conflict;
4. Multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder national platforms and similar national coordination mechanisms should continue to be developed and strengthened, with greater participation of civil society organisations;
5. The Africa Regional Platform should continue to be the mechanism to review progress in the implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy, the Programme of Action and the HFA, to advocate for Disaster Risk Reduction, coordinate regional and sub-regional activities of stakeholders and facilitate networking among them, and promote information-sharing to avoid duplication of initiatives and encourage replication of good practices;
6. Involvement of disaster-prone communities, including women, vulnerable populations and minorities, in the identification and assessment of risks and vulnerabilities, as well as in disaster preparedness planning, should be ensured through closer coordination with civil society organisations.
7. National meteorological and hydrological services (NMHS), geological surveys, regional specialised centres, and academic, research and scientific institutions should be supported to strengthen their capacities on risk assessment, observations, monitoring, analysis and forecasting of extreme climate events, as well as early warning, in order to improve the collection and provision of data and information and to make these available to affected populations to enhance their response capacity to natural hazards;
8. National meteorological and hydrological services (NMHS), geological surveys, specialised centres, and academic, research and scientific institutions should be integrated into national disaster management mechanisms, including national platforms, and their data and information used for development of policies, strategies and programmes;
9. Development and adoption of Disaster Risk Reduction subject areas into school curricula by national and local authorities should be encouraged, and networks to develop knowledge management (including of traditional knowledge) and capacities for Disaster Risk Reduction in Africa, should be strengthened and promoted;
10. Synergies between Disaster Risk Reduction and climate variability and change frameworks and processes should be forged and promoted at national, sub-regional and regional levels as part of the Africa region's efforts in defining its position for global climate change negotiations, in particular for the forthcoming climate change meeting (COP15) in Copenhagen.

11. Social and economic development infrastructure should take into account climate-related hazards and associated risks in urban setting and cities, and the functioning of critical facilities, such as schools, hospitals and public transport, should be ensured through appropriate urban planning and management;
12. Africa should apply a regional readiness framework and become ready to manage global protracted disasters such as influenza pandemics through promoting preparedness at all levels, taking into consideration critical inter-sectoral dependencies.
13. United Nations agencies and development partners should provide strategic support to governments, and facilitate a holistic and coordinated approach to Disaster Risk Reduction;
14. The revised Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, extended to 2015, should be resourced and implemented by all stakeholders at local, national, sub-regional and regional levels in Africa.