

**STATEMENT BY THE HEAD OF BARBADOS' DELEGATION TO THE THIRD SESSION OF THE GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION, GENEVA, MAY 9-15, 2011**

Chair, Excellencies, Heads of Delegations, Ladies and Gentlemen.

As the Head of the Barbados delegation to this Third Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, I am pleased to record my country's appreciation to the Government and people of Switzerland for their fine hospitality in hosting this important meeting and to the ISDR for the excellent arrangements that have been made to facilitate this global forum.

In Barbados, we have willingly embraced the disaster risk reduction agenda, beginning from the United Nations' General Assembly resolution establishing the International Decade for Disaster Reduction 1990 -2000 to the Hyogo Framework for Action, 2005-2015. We commit to continuing to support Disaster Risk Reduction initiatives at the international, regional and national levels following the end of this implementing period scheduled to end in 2015. We are also committed to ensuring that the peculiarities of Small Island Developing States are always taken into active consideration when the successor for the Hyogo Framework for Action is crafted.

Chairman, Barbados, as small developing Caribbean island is mindful that our region is one of the most disaster-prone areas of the world. Tourism is the leading source of employment and revenue to our country. We are therefore very mindful of the potential devastating impact of natural hazards including tropical storms, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and tsunamis. Man-induced hazards have also had devastating impacts on our population, their livelihoods and our social and economic development.

We are fully cognizant of our national responsibility and obligation to protect our population and critical infrastructure. We have taken steps since 2003 to provide a policy framework that embraces Comprehensive Disaster Management which is the Caribbean brand of disaster management that promotes Disaster Risk Reduction and adaptation to Climate Change. CDM is therefore the platform on which emergency management is being pursued in Barbados.

Under the ambit of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, the intergovernmental mechanism for collaboration and coordination, we actively participate in regional programmes, along with the other seventeen Members of States of the Agency.

One of the major objectives of Comprehensive Disaster Management programme is to ensure that disaster risk reduction is mainstreamed into the national emergency management system and legal provision made to mitigate the effects of all hazards with full participation from the government, private sector, communities and individuals. We have made a concerted effort to align our national and regional CDM programmes with that of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

We are therefore pleased to submit our National Progress Report on the Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action. In so doing, we have documented our successes, identified the gaps in our disaster risk reduction programme at the national and regional levels and pledge to rigorously and systematically tackle these as we look forward to 2015. One of the anticipated outcomes of this Platform would be to galvanise dedicated resources, both financial and technical, to support further implementation of our respective national and regional programmes.

The recent experience with the passage of Tropical Storm Tomas during 2010 Hurricane Season further convinced us of the need to strengthen our emergency management capacities at the community level. We are therefore

fully supportive of the theme of this Third Session: **Invest Today for a Safer Tomorrow- Increase Investment in Local Action**. Chair we have already taken a decision to reorganize our emergency management community mechanism, known as the District Emergency Organisation. This is the entity that harnesses the support of volunteers in their communities for preparedness, response and disaster risk reduction. The recently established community-based Constituency Councils by central government also presents an opportunity to strengthen programming at the community and efforts are in train to fully integrate these two entities to further enhance the efforts at the community level.

It is against this background that Barbados has consistently supported the global, regional and national disaster risk reduction and climate change agendas . We have taken steps, nationally and regionally, to protect coastal infrastructure. The implementation of early warning systems to address Tsunamis and other coastal hazards peculiar to Barbados and the rest of the Caribbean region has begun. The immense forces of nature dictate that disaster risk reduction requires collective global approaches that can facilitate the sharing of ideas, best practices, technologies, skills and financial resources in our quest to build resilient communities and strong economies.

We are assured that much more can be achieved through partnerships- creating new ones and strengthening existing ones; better mobilization through new and innovative avenues for resourcing and re-thinking processes for the allocation of existing resources. Barbados will continue to work with regional and international donor partners and governments to strengthen the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), which has made significant progress over the years, to improve disaster management expertise in its member states and in other territories in the region.

Our achievements in national and regional cooperation and coordination of various disaster events are good practices worthy of emulation and we are always willing to share with the global community. We too are proud of the contribution we have made.

In closing, I reiterate the commitment of Barbados to continue engagement in and support of regional and international risk reduction initiatives. It is our hope and expectation that this week's dialogue will translate disaster risk management from the realm of technical discussions, to the empowerment of populations with appropriate information, structures and resources that will help to reduce risk to natural disasters in our countries.

Thank You.