



REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

**Statement at the Opening Ceremony of the Third
World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in
Sendai – Delivered by The Gambia’s Minister of
Environment, Climate Change, Water and Wild Life,
Hon. Pa Ousman Jarju**

Your Excellency, Prime Minister of Japan

**Your Excellency, The Secretary General of the
United Nations**

**Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Governments
here present**

**Special Representative of the UN Secretary General
on Disaster Risk Reduction**

**Heads of UN Agencies, Regional Organizations,
Multi-lateral and Bi-lateral Organizations and
Institutions here present**

**Representatives from NGOs, Civil Society, the
Private Sector and other actors in Disaster Risk
Reduction and Humanitarian Affairs**

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

First of all, please allow me to convey the special greetings and best wishes from His Excellency the President of The Republic of The Gambia Sheikh Professor Dr. Alhaji Yahya A.J.J Jammeh and from the people of The Gambia.

We would like to thank the UNISDR for organizing this important world conference and the friendly government and hospitable people of Japan for hosting this auspicious event.

The participation of The Gambia in this important international forum provides a window of opportunity for us to join other developing Countries and the international community at large to discuss the post 2015 Hyogo Framework Agenda and productively participate in the various segments of the conference.

Madam President, from the onset please allow me to state that The Gambia identifies itself with the ideals and objectives of the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. During the past three decades, The Gambia has experienced frequent occurrence of disaster events, both natural and anthropogenic. The country is particularly susceptible to disasters induced by weather related hazards such as drought, windstorms, flood and sea level rise. A metre sea level rise will lead to the submergence of about

92 square kilometers of land including the capital city which is below one metre above sea level.

The negative socio-economic impact of these disasters could be very far reaching and negatively impacts the achievements of the country's overall development goals.

Consequently, Madam President, The Gambia's two development blue prints, the Vision 2020 and the Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment (PAGE) 2012 – 2015, recognize the country's vulnerability to disasters as a major and constant threat to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the Post 2015 International Development Agenda.

For these reasons, amongst others, in The Gambia, DRR is an integral objective of environmental related policies. Cognizant of this, provisions to regulate the management of environmental disasters are included in the National Environment Management Act (NEMA) of 1994. A National Disaster Management Governing Council was established at the highest political level and chaired by His Excellency the President. This Council includes sector Ministers, the Private Sector and Non State Actors to spearhead all DRR activities at national level.

The Government established the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) as an autonomous institution under the direct supervision of HE The President and the Governing Council. The Act that establishes the NDMA is complemented by the National Disaster Management Policy and Strategic Action Plan. This shows the highest level of commitment from government on matters relating to disaster management programmes in the country. Policies and

In this respect, the government continues to accord the highest priority to the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action and would continue to show commitment and resolve in the implementation of future frameworks in line with our development priorities and plans.

The Gambia has built the resilience of some communities on DRR, and also invested in human, financial and material support leading to increased capacity of the Disaster Risk Reduction Structures countrywide. Standard Risk Assessment tools, situation analysis report tools and data collection tools have been developed with support from donor partners. This has led to the establishment of an Early Warning System, and various contingency plans at

national and regional levels based on these risk assessments.

Madam President, though the Gambia has made positive strides in the achievement of the HFA priorities, we also face various challenges such as inadequate Waste Management facilities, unplanned settlements, leading to poor drainage systems. Post disaster disease outbreaks also pose threats to achievements in the health sector. Other challenges include inadequate capacity in disaster risk management.

Given the importance of agriculture to employment, income generation, and food security, the Government of The Gambia has come up with the Vision 2016 for food self-sufficiency with strong emphasis on building resilience. However, the agriculture sector is vulnerable to natural hazards with events of flash floods and droughts posing significant risks to the livelihoods of many Gambians as is the case for many vulnerable communities around the world.

Madam President, given the above challenges, we hold the strong view that overcoming them would require international partnership and therefore The Gambia renews its commitment to collaborating with International partners to addressing these challenges.

The implementation of the Post-2015 Framework on DRR will require more collaboration both from the grassroots level to the international level. This will serve as a lubricant for the smooth implementation of the Framework by all countries.

As we approach the finish line of the Hyogo Framework for Action 1 and anticipating a new era and framework for DRR, The Gambia strongly reiterates the importance of international cooperation to support the means of implementation including finance, research and appropriate technology for LDCs to effectively manage disaster risk.

On a concluding note, please allow me, on behalf of His Excellency President Alhagie Dr yahya AJJ Jammeh and the Gambian people, to register our sincere thanks and deep appreciation to the organizers of the conference and the Government and people of Japan for the warm hospitality accorded to the Gambian delegation.

I thank you all for your kind attention.