

Official Statement of the Government of Georgia
The Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction
14-18 March 2015, Sendai, Japan

Madame President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Georgia, I would like to convey my special thanks to the Government of Japan and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction for the warm hospitality and outstanding organization of this important event.

Everyone, attending the Third UN World Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction has at least one question on their mind. How has the world performed over the last ten years within the Hyogo Framework for Action?

The answer from a Georgian perspective may reflect some pride in our progress to strengthen national resilience coupled with reality, that much more has to be done. The government of Georgia is fully committed to the principle – “prevention is better than cure”. The rationale for this policy is based on the scale of disaster losses that Georgia has suffered over the past 40 years: human casualties and damage to health, approximately US\$14 billion bill to the economy. Until now, because of specifics of our landscape, floods, flash floods, landslides, mudflows, snow avalanches, glaciers remain a pressing issues for us.

Today I have an opportunity to attend this conference and to share with you some of the achievements of Georgia in the context of disaster risk reduction and to outline prospect of future cooperation.

Ten years ago quite few within the government was caring about “disaster risk reduction”. Today it is a sustainable development priority and much has changed as a result. Another Georgian city has recently joined the global Making Cities Resilient campaign. This vibrant movement, organized by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction boasts more than 2,500 member cities from around the world.

Progress in addressing disaster risk issues has been made across various sectors; allocations from the state budget have increased for the monitoring, forecasting and prevention of environmental and disaster risk. The Parliament of Georgia has adopted a new “Law on Civil Safety”, which legally covers emergency management framework and its cycle of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

In 2013, new dedicated unit was established within the prime-ministers office, to ensure cross agency coordination of DRR and emergency response activities and until today, unfortunately, it already faced several hazards to address.

In June 2014 Georgia signed "EU-Georgia Association Agreement". "Association Agenda" was adopted, which stipulates the need for dialogue and gradual approximation of the national legislation towards a number of EU policies and legislation, including, in particular, civil protection, flood management and industrial accident prevention. We regard peer reviews of disaster risk management policies in Europe in the context of the Hyogo Framework for Action as an excellent technical assistance tool where policy recommendations also could be greatly beneficial for the EU neighboring countries. Furthermore, we support Peer Review of implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action as a tool to assist countries in improving accountability, transparency and governance for disaster risk reduction.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Reducing vulnerability in today's changing global landscape is a cross-cutting and complex development issue requiring unprecedented efforts. International community needs to renew its commitment and prioritize disaster risk reduction on the global agenda. All of the later events such as, inter alia, Hurricane Katrina, drought in the Horn of Africa, devastating floods and earthquakes affecting millions in Asia once again illustrate the need to agree and adopt a revised version of the Hyogo Framework for Action. The underlying drivers of risk still abound: improper land use and non-existent or poorly implemented building codes; environmental degradation; poverty; climate change, etc;

Special attention should be paid to education – resilient planning and construction, ensuring personal safety, rapid response and recovery will remain just good wishes unless people actually know how to do it right.

As an outcome of this conference, resilience can become the hallmark of 2015 and set the tone for agreements later in the year of Action on Climate Change and Sustainable Development which will further enhance efforts to reduce disaster risk.

Georgia urges leaders from around the world to renew commitment and prioritize disaster risk reduction. Our country is ready to play its full part in this effort.

In conclusion, allow me to seize this opportunity to convey my best wishes for future productive work and express hope that our efforts would be a significant step forward in identification of practical ways for effective implementation of disaster risk reduction activities at all levels.

Thank you!