

Mr. Chairman
Excellencies
Distinguished Guests

It is my privilege to be with the distinguished participants from across the globe at this Third Session of Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. The Platform provides not only a forum to the comity of nations to renew their commitment to make the world safer from disasters but also provides valuable opportunity for cross fertilization of ideas and sharing of experiences to evolve better strategies that would help reduce risks faced by vulnerable communities across the globe.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

The nature and frequency of disasters are changing. Climate change, galloping urbanization, food security and conflicts are magnifying not only the impacts of natural hazards but also the risks that underlie them. The poor are hardest hit, especially in disaster-prone regions of the world. The world has witnessed how easily disasters can wipe out decades of progress in poverty reduction and sustainable development. Disasters, both natural and human induced, attack the poor at several levels—interrupting livelihoods, draining productive and personal assets, destroying essential public infrastructure, and heightening social and economic uncertainty. Reducing vulnerability in today's changing global landscape requires an unprecedented effort: the best knowledge and skills; greater innovation; enhanced human and institutional capacity; and much more efficient disaster management organization at the country, regional, and international levels. But most importantly, international community need to renew its commitment and resolve to treat the fight against disasters as the prioritize item of the global agenda.

Hydro-meteorological hazards are only one type of hazard dealt with by the DRR community that will continue to encompass a whole range of other hazards and disasters, such as geological, technological, etc. This proves the need to develop a more integrated approach and focus on climate change adaptation, closely related to disaster risk reduction, with the aim to protect vulnerable population, retain development gains and build a more secure and sustainable society.

The Government, despite the limitations in resources, expertise, and human resources, undertakes efforts to improve the country preparedness to disasters. Despite the absence of strategic documents to regulate and harmonize the work in this field, a number of regulations and decisions have been developed in the last few years by the Department of Emergency Situations Management of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Environment. In the sphere of disaster risk management in Georgia there is an understanding at all levels of the need for a more coordinated

approach, systematized risk monitoring and, what is of most importance, for a development of a strategic document with clearly set goals, priorities, and timeframe.

Having adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) in 2005, disaster risk reduction becomes a priority for the Government. Nevertheless there is urgent need to fill the gaps in education and professional qualification of the staff of the state agencies that are responsible for introducing DRR in their respective areas. An additional issue requiring immediate intervention is the education and preparedness of the population. To improve the general perception of disaster risk reduction it is important to deal with problems like shortage of internal financing, low realization of long-term economic advantages of investing in risk reduction over response and recovery, and continuing reliance on external assistance and relief programs.

The starting point for the achievement of tangible results ensuring positive changes in disaster risk management in Georgia has been recently launched by the Ministry of Education and Science together with UNICEF. DRR has become part of mandatory national curriculum, grades through 1-9. Additionally head of class hour program has been elaborated and one hour a week of class time is dedicated to DRR education in formal educational setting.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

It takes decades to build, but it takes seconds to destroy as a consequence of disaster. We need to work together to reduce the impact of disasters. The Global Platform is one of those avenues which provide us the opportunity to sit together, share ideas and develop viable strategies to make humanity safer and resilient against the disasters. I hope that this Third Session of Global Platform will go a long way in fostering closer relationships amongst the nations with a renewed commitment from them to fight disasters together.

Thank you.

Mr. George Zedginidze
Deputy Minister of Environment of Georgia
Head of Delegation of Georgia