**STATEMENT TO THE THIRD SESSION OF THE GLOBAL**

 **PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION, GENEVA,**

 **SWITZERLAND, MAY 08 TO 13, 2011, GOVERNMENT OF**

 **SAINT LUCIA**

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Delegates,

Colleagues,

This Third Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, convened concurrently with the World Reconstruction Conference, takes place at a time of very profound challenges in history. It is a period which, more than any other time, highlights how susceptible the world is to disasters both in their diversity, frequency, and magnitude, natural and manmade.

It is a period which also underscores the fact that whilst Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries, are the most vulnerable to natural disasters, these phenomena have no regard for levels of development, notwithstanding that the developed countries, with higher levels of resources are better placed to respond to , and deal with the after effects of such disasters. Even developed countries however, require assistance, moral material and otherwise depending on the scale, magnitude and intensity of the disaster as has been observed in recent times.

Disaster Risk Reduction therefore is one area where all countries, developed or developing, rich and poor, small and large have a common interest.

Mr. Chairman,

It is in this context, that Saint Lucia takes this opportunity to express its support for this process of information and experience sharing at the international level, among countries, regional and international organizations, as we seek to collectively design a framework for minimizing and mitigating risks and exposure arising from disasters.

Saint Lucia also supports the call for regional collaboration and the institution of joint mechanisms at the level of particular groups of countries. We are particularly and acutely aware of the benefits of such collaboration.

My Country is a part of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), of which an important Associate institution is the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA). CDEMA has evolved as an important agency and vital instrument of regional integration, and its value to the region is evident from the leadership role it has played and continues to play in the coordination of disaster management and response issues in the Community, and the tangible benefits accruing to member states as a result.

Saint Lucia therefore reiterates its full confidence in CDEMA as an institution and wishes to appeal to the donor community to continue to provide and to further enhance its support for what has been and continues to be a vital instrument of regional cooperation, particularly in disaster prevention and risk mitigation.

Mr. Chairman,

My Country has not been spared the ravages of natural disasters which seem to have engulfed the world in recent times; although it may not feature as prominently in the international media as some other cases have been.

On October 30 and 31, 2010, we were struck by one of the most severe natural disasters in living memory. Hurricane Tomas came with winds of 160 kilometres per hour accompanied by an intensity of rainfall never before experienced.

This combination of wind and rain, led to massive and widespread destruction to infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, the housing stock, compromised communication and public utilities, destroyed the greater part of agricultural production, resulted in massive landslides, widespread flooding and large scale destruction of social infrastructure among others. In the end, seven (7) persons were confirmed to have lost their lives and five (5) missing presumed dead.

An assessment carried out with the support of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), put the total cost of damage and losses to the different sectors at EC $ 907.7 million or US $ 336.2 million.

Mr. Chairman,

These figures may appear small when compared with others. But consider that the total impact represents 43.4 % of Gross Domestic Product, was nine (9) times agricultural GDP; three (3) times tourism GDP, the country’s major source of foreign exchange; 62 % of the value of exports of goods and services; 19 % of gross domestic investment and 47 % of public external debt. These figures derived by ECLAC place in context the magnitude of the disaster we experienced.

Consider also that this disaster came only months after one of the most severe droughts in the island’s history, which resulted in extensive loss of agricultural production, and compromised the island’s water supply, and the scale and effects become even more apparent. Tomas may not have been a mega-disaster for the rest of the world, but in our context it was overwhelming.

Mr. Chairman,

I thought it necessary to highlight our plight if only to remind us here that while we deliberate on the issues, there are some of us who are engaged in the struggle to recover, to find resources to finance reconstruction. The situation is such that every time it rains there is flooding in some areas because of the heavy siltation of the rivers from Tomas some of which remain to be addressed due to resource constraints. And we are weeks away from the commencement of another Hurricane Season. We ought not to forget simply because the emergency phase of the disaster has elapsed.

So far, no more than about fifteen (15) per cent of the financial requirements for reconstruction have been identified, and these are largely in the form of loans. In this context, traditional economic indices like per capita GDP are largely irrelevant.

Mr. Chairman,

These are the realities which some of us face as we gather here in this beautiful city of Geneva, to deliberate on issues of mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in national development and reconstruction, enhancing risk reduction strategies through climate change adaptation; empowering local authorities at the community / individual household level; building resilience at all levels and designing an institutional framework for governance.

Following Hurricane Tomas, the Government of Saint Lucia, established a National Reconstruction and Development Unit within the Ministry of Finance, Economic Affairs and National Development. Among the principal mandates of this unit is integrating risk mitigation and climate change adaptation measures in development initiatives, ensuring that risk assessments are routinely conducted at the national level for planning purposes and ensuring effective poverty reduction and sustainable development. The overriding constraint continues to be the availability of predictable financial resources.

We endorse and express our commitment to the Hyogo Framework for Action and will implement these principles within the constraint of the means at our disposal. The 2011 Global Assessment Report (GAR) for Saint Lucia has been completed, as well as the interim National Progress Report on Implementation (2009-2011). In short, we can do so as far as resources allow.

Nevertheless, we applaud the United Nations, particularly the UNISDR for convening this Third Session of the Global Platform and recognizing the importance of reconstruction. We express our appreciation to the UNISDR for facilitating our participation at this conference, and thus providing opportunities for networking among other things.

Finally my delegation wishes to thank the Government of Switzerland for the courtesies extended.

I thank you.