

Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

Statement by Col. Chabilall Ramsarup

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Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen:

I am honoured to convey warm greetings and felicitations from the Government and people of Guyana to the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. In doing so let me register our full solidarity with Vanuatu in the difficult challenge they now face. I also wish to express the sincere appreciation of my delegation to the Government and people of Japan for hosting this Conference.

Mr. President. The opportune timing of this Conference cannot be overstated. The Conference takes places within the context of efforts by the international community to define an ambitious and transformative post 2015 development agenda, global arrangements for financing for development and also on-going work for scaled-up and urgent action to combat climate change.

Accordingly, this Conference can make a meaningful contribution to the overall endeavours to change patterns of behaviour and to usher in a more sustainable paradigm of development, including through greater risk awareness and resilience. In crafting a new framework, we can fortunately call on the rich experience from the implementation of the Hyogo framework

which has played a fundamental role in promoting disaster risk reduction at all levels. We have rightly celebrated its many successes at this Conference.

Without doubt, one of the more seminal lessons we have gleaned is the need not only to build better but also to promote disaster risk approaches which are coherent with overall development frameworks and in which people and communities are fully vested. Indeed, only such approaches are likely to be effective and sustainable.

For this reason, Guyana calls for an ambitious, coherent and actionable framework that will be durable and spur national and global efforts for disaster risk reduction and the achievement of sustainable development. And access to more resources and creating new and better partnerships will be central to achieving its successful implementation. We trust that fostering progress on both of these aspects will indeed be one of the legacies of this Conference.

Mr. President,

Countries such as Guyana can ill afford competing and contradictory development imperatives and agendas. For SIDS, including low-lying coastal states such as Guyana, disaster risk reduction is integral to our efforts to achieve sustainable development and, in Guyana, the Civil Defence Commission has spearheaded and coordinated national efforts to build resilience and reduce disaster risk.

For instance, in 2005 massive flooding caused destruction the equivalent of 60% of our GDP. However, since then owing to focused attention to disaster risk management and significant investment in rehabilitating our drainage and irrigation infrastructure, including our river and sea, and in spite of having higher levels of rainfall we been able to avoid a recurrence.

In this regard, the development of the Guyana Disaster Risk Management Plan with the support of major partners and stakeholders ranks among our more tangible recent achievements. The DRM takes a strategic perspective of our major aspects of vulnerability and provides a coherent framework to facilitate even greater progress with respect to prevention and response coordination.

The experience of Guyana has demonstrated in a clarion manner that sustainably and comprehensively reducing disaster risk is very much about changes on the ground, especially influencing people's perceptions and behaviour. We therefore believe that to assuring success will entail the strong leadership of Government and the active involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including, as appropriate, civil society, the private sector, women, the elderly, persons with disabilities, indigenous people and local communities who are often the most vulnerable and least resilient.

Mr. President,

Such national efforts as I have mentioned must be complemented at the international level. The WCDRR must therefore galvanize international support and intensify efforts to reduce disaster risk. Guyana is of the view that the post 2015 Framework for DRR must be consistent with national development realities and modalities and with the post 2015 development agenda, including the SDGs.

In brief, it must take due account of the importance of stronger interlinkages among disaster risk reduction, recovery and long term development planning and must thus facilitate more coordinated and comprehensive strategies that integrate disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation considerations

into all aspects of decision-making and the planning of development and humanitarian actions.

In the lead up to this Conference, Guyana has encouraged particular emphasis on strengthening the treatment of food security and nutrition as this issue is at the heart of efforts to promote resilience and reduce risk and vulnerability. There will also need to be clear and unambiguous provisions with respect to the means of implementation, especially in support of the efforts of developing countries. This is of particular importance in terms of financial resources, knowledge transfer and a rational international architecture for implementation.

Mr. President,

As I close, I wish to note that in response to current and emerging challenges, the DRR framework is now significantly expanded and the demands for the services of the ISDR Secretariat have been steadily increasing in recent times. We therefore urge greater support to strengthen the Secretariat to more efficiently and effectively fulfil its mandate and we commend the commitments that have already been made in this regard.

Disaster risk reduction is truly everybody's business. Guyana reaffirms its commitment to strong efforts to advance disaster risk reduction and management including through regional approaches and initiatives. We call on all member states and stakeholders to also play their part. Let us together ensure that we deliver on the enormous potential of this Conference to contribute to disaster reduction and the promotion of sustainable development.

I thank you.