Key Note Address and

Country Statement for India

Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen. Before I make a statement on behalf of India, I take this opportunity to convey our heartfelt condolences to the people of Japan for the loss of lives, the huge devastation and the trials and tribulations which they have experienced in the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011, the resulting fires and the consequential nuclear emergency. The remarkable forbearance, stoicism and discipline exhibited by the people of Japan in the face of a calamity of this magnitude is a testimony to the resilience of the people of the nation and we are confident that it is these qualities, coupled with well known Japanese determination and fixity of purpose, which will result in the re-emergence of a new Japan which we all know and admire. I am sure I speak for every person in this room when I seek to convey our best wishes in this endeavour and pledge such unstinting support as may be necessary in this regard. That having been said, it is also important to recognize that the recent disaster firmly underscores the limitations of the human mind to de-mystify and manage, if not control, nature. It also drives home the imperatives to prioritise and accelerate our measures/efforts for prevention and streamlining of response mechanisms. Implicit in this is the imperative for regional and global institutions to increase their collaborative efforts to face disaster situations emanating either from nature or due to climate change or generated by human action.

In recent years there has been a comprehensive paradigm shift in India’s approach to both disaster management and climate change adaptation. From a relief centric approach, India has adopted a holistic and integrated framework for disaster management which highlights the interdependence of the economy, environment and development. This framework also links the issues of poverty alleviation, capacity building, community empowerment, mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) into development and other structural and non-structural issues of prevention and preparedness, response and recovery for effective disaster risk mitigation and management. Complementary to this the National Environment Policy 2006 lays emphasis both on mitigation and adaptation in regard to Climate Change.

Disasters have implications for development. When a disaster strikes it impacts the development process, depriving and marginalizing people particularly the less advantaged among them. A large number of people live in hazard-prone areas. Our Government has, therefore, taken the initiative to tackle this problem in two ways: firstly by taking up specific capacity development programmes and secondly by targeted food security, poverty alleviation and social security programmes. All these programmes, with a gender-specific lens, focus on women, child and adolescent girls.

Government of India has initiated the process of strengthening the institutions at the national, state, district and Panchayat (village bodies) levels for implementing the national policy and guidelines for disaster risk reduction including reconstruction and recovery. Resource allocation for capacity building is being done with ‘reverse pyramid’ approach where larger allocation will be at the local levels.

The Government is in the process of finalizing a National Capacity Development Plan and a National Response Plan; in addition different sectors are working on the mitigation plan pertaining to hazards involved in their respective domain. State Disaster Management Plans and District Disaster Management Plans are taking shape in most of the States and districts. Government has also raised specialized forces, named as the National Disaster Response Force, for responding to disasters which includes nuclear emergencies. This force (NDRF) was deployed recently to work with the Japanese response team.

In order to address the issue of funding, the National Disaster Management Act, envisages creation of two separate funds to meet the requirement of response and mitigation. Financial arrangements for response are already institutionalized in India at different levels – the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) at federal level and the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) at the State level. Several mitigation activities are already underway within different sectors dealing with their respective designated disaster. The need for a dedicated Mitigation Fund is under examination.

Government of India is further pursuing initiatives to catalyse the participation of private organizations. Private sector, either in the context of Corporate Social Responsibility or as major stakeholder, is presently playing a very limited role. The National Disaster Management Authority has initiated the process for institutionalizing their action and mainstreaming them into DRR activities. In order to develop ex-ante financial mechanisms for Disaster risk reduction, the Government of India has also been exploring the possibilities of more financial instruments such as insurance and other risk transfer mechanisms.

It is our firm belief that Disaster Risk Reduction target cannot be achieved as a sectoral approach. The Government of India is therefore taking all the initiatives for mainstreaming DRR in all the new development projects of the country. Factoring DRR component is now mandatory for all new infrastructure projects.

India is committed to more sectoral reforms and will continue strengthening all these initiatives taken in the past. These include Civil Defence reforms, strengthening of disaster management institutions, professionalizing disaster response systems and enhancing the scale of various disaster mitigation projects such as the cyclone mitigation project, the earthquake mitigation project etc. India has successfully implemented the programme of disaster risk management at different levels and has enhanced the ambit of such programmes for the purpose of strengthening the State and District disaster management institutions, with special focus on urban risk reduction. It has further institutionalized the incorporation of disaster management into the course curriculum of schools and colleges as well as in the technical education.

Development of disaster data is an issue for better preparedness. The Central Statistical Organisation has been tasked with developing and collating disaster related data from local level to the national level. Several initiatives have also been taken to strengthen the agencies engaged in forecasting of different disasters. As such, today we have the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) for tsunamis, Central Water Commission for floods, India Meteorological Department (IMD) for rainfall and cyclones, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) for space related and remote sensing data, etc.

Community capacity is the key to disaster risk reduction. Government of India is working very closely with the civil society and Non Government Organisations for strengthening community based disaster management. A separate fund has been constituted for the purpose of capacity development and has been made available to the States for accelerating the measures for building adequate infrastructure for training and skill upgradation of those involved in different facets of disaster management initiatives.

Recently Government of India has also constituted a Working Group on Disaster Management for measures to be taken during the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-2017) for streamlining the institutional structure, exploring innovative ways and means for application of science and technology, framing a policy to encourage public-private partnership and for assessing integration of disaster related concerns into the Government sponsored schemes and projects.

India is firmly committed to promoting regional cooperation on DRR and has been making concerted efforts in the forum of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) for developing an emergency response system to deal with natural disasters in South Asia.

Before concluding, allow me to reiterate to this august gathering, that India will continue its commitment to ex-ante disaster risk management initiatives within an integrated climate change framework and strengthen its activities towards DRR by making it an integral part of the development process. India will continue its efforts to work as one global family for this cause and also facilitate regional cooperation, and would extend its support to any Government or institution or organization for promoting sustainable development, and to make the world as safe a place as is humanly possible.