

## **Official Statement of the Republic of Korea**

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good afternoon.

On behalf of the Government of Republic of Korea, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to UNISDR for hosting this important meeting in Geneva and giving an opportunity to convey a statement of NEMA. Since its establishment in 2004 as a specialized agency taking charge of natural and manmade disasters, civil defense, and fire administration, NEMA has accomplished noticeable achievements in disaster risk reduction (DRR) such as strengthening national legislations, increasing DRR investment, improving preparedness and response system, establishing a national platform, promoting community-based DRR, and enhancing partnerships at all levels. These activities resulted in significant reduction in loss of human lives and assets.

Taking this opportunity, NEMA wants to share its experience on strengthening local actions for DRR, focusing on six points.

First, local governments have been setting up their own platforms against disasters. Local disaster and safety management headquarters have been set up with disaster control centers for effective and prompt actions for disaster and emergency management. In case of disasters, all related agencies join the headquarters and cooperate to respond to disaster based on their own roles. In addition, all local headquarters have effective communication system with central headquarters.

Second, community-based voluntary response team has been formulated based on the Natural Disaster Countermeasures Act. Sixty four thousand volunteers

including local residents, civil society organizations, public sectors, and experts registered as members of the team in 219 cities and counties. The key functions of this team are to patrol disaster-prone sites during preparedness phase, to support setting up safety line, and to help the evacuation of people from danger zone during emergency.

Third, village heads are all connected by hotlines, so that local government can contact them when disasters are imminent. NEMA enhanced the function of village heads by appointing them as on-site disaster managers. On-site disaster managers are regularly trained for efficient safety management and proper evacuation procedures. When unexpected flash flood occurred at Bonghwa county in 2009, a village head saved the citizen's life by alarming them. Without the village head's action, many citizens would have lost their lives because even meteorological agency and local governments did not detect the heavy rain at that time.

Fourth, Cell Broadcast Service (CBS) has been actively used as an early warning tool for people in danger or hazardous areas. It is a very powerful tool as it conveys disaster information to unlimited cell phone users in real time. More specific files such as "what-to-do Manual" can be sent using callback service. In addition, public awareness can be effectively raised with CBS.

Fifth, regular drills and exercises are practiced. Safe Korea exercise (SKX) is the largest drill which is performed annually since 2005, inviting regular citizens, local governments, schools, and military. Major target for the exercise is typhoons, heavy rain, earthquake, and tsunami.

Sixth, voluntary participation of civil society is promoted for local capacity building and public-private partnership. Complex disasters cannot be managed by the government alone. We need to vitalize active participation of local communities. One good example can be found during people's activities at the massive oil spill disaster

site in December 2007. At that time, the Korean people showed amazing power to participate voluntarily and clean spilled oil in a short time. It was the real power of the people and was recorded as an unprecedented best practice not only in Korean disaster management history but also in the world disaster history.

For successful DRR, we need to promote not only national and international disaster management system, but also local government's capacities and accountabilities for DRR. I would like to conclude this statement by recommending effective strategies for strengthening local actions. Leadership of mayors and key local actors of DRR should be strengthened. In addition, comprehensive approach based on risk assessment of local communities is required for effective DRR.

For sustainable local actions for DRR, we also need to avoid unbalanced local investment. Relatively poorer local governments tend to spend less budget on DRR, so therefore, we need to support them using disaster management fund and other necessary financial systems.

Finally, it is time for us to develop concrete strategy for integrating DRR and climate change adaptation at local level. Local communities are the right place where DRR should be integrated with CCA because they are directly affected by emerging risk due to climate change. For this end, raising awareness for DRR and CCA at local level, utilizing CCA measures and funds for DRR, and resetting the design criteria of disaster related facilities should be considered as priorities of national and local policies.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Thank you.