

**Government of Malawi**

**STATEMENT BY THE**

**SECRETARY AND COMMISSIONER FOR DISASTER MANAGEMENT AFFAIRS, MRS LILLIAN D. NG’OMA**

**AT THE**

 **THIRD SESSION OF THE GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

**GENEVA, SWITZERLAND, 8-13 MAY 2011**

The Chairperson;

The UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs;

The UN Assistant Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction;

Your Excellencies;

Dear Colleagues;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Malawi, just like any other country in the world, experiences different types of disasters. The common disasters include droughts, floods, heavy storms, hailstorms, earthquakes, disease epidemics and HIV and AIDS pandemic. These disasters affect many households every year leading to loss of household property, livelihoods and damage to crops and infrastructure. They, therefore, seriously disrupt the socio-economic development gains in the country. For example, Malawi experienced a series of earthquakes in 2009 in Karonga district in the northern region with magnitudes ranging from 5.8 to 6.2 on the richter scale. The earthquakes caused economic loss of about USD 5.2 million as a result of damage to infrastructure and people’s livelihoods.

Malawi has had an institutional structure for disaster risk management since 1991 when a Disaster Preparedness and Relief Act was passed. However, in order to improve the coordination mechanisms, government established a National Disaster Preparedness and Relief Technical Committee (NDPRTC) and 7 technical sub-committees last year (2010). The technical committee is a multi stakeholder forum comprising government, civil society organisations, United Nations agencies, the academia, the private sector and the media. It acts as a technical arm of the National Disaster Preparedness and Relief Committee. The 7 sub technical committees are responsible for:

1. Agriculture and Food Security;
2. Health and Nutrition;
3. Water and Sanitation;
4. Assessment;
5. Transport and Logistics;
6. Shelter and Camp Management; and
7. Early Warning.

Malawi has developed Operational Guidelines for Disaster Risk Management. The guidelines specify roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery for different hazards. Currently, we are developing a National Disaster Risk Management Policy. The policy is expected to be finalised by December 2011.

The existing Disaster Preparedness and Relief Act of 1991 focuses on disaster preparedness and response. Government is planning to review the Act once the policy is finalised so that it can focus on disaster risk management.

In order to reduce and mitigate the impacts of disasters amongst communities, the Government of Malawi, in collaboration with civil society organisations, has been implementing the following activities in disaster prone areas:

* Dredging and excavation of silted rivers;
* Afforestation of river banks;
* Establishment of small scale irrigation projects in drought prone areas;
* Construction of dykes along rivers which flood annually; and
* Building capacity of disaster risk management structures.

In its efforts to implement disaster risk reduction, Malawi has faced a number of challenges. Some of them include:

* Inadequate funding for disaster risk reduction;
* Inadequate capacity in disaster risk reduction at national, district and community levels;
* Lack of an effective integrated early warning system; and
* Lack of mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into development planning.

For the next five years, the Government of Malawi would like to focus on the following:

1. **Develop comprehensive multi-hazard risk maps for the country.**

Malawi does not have multi-hazard and vulnerability maps that indicate areas prone to particular hazards. The development of these maps would be the basis for developing appropriate strategies to address disaster risks in different areas.

1. **Develop an efficient and effective integrated national early warning system.**

This would involve upgrading the current early warning systems to appropriate standards and integrating them into one system.

1. **Build capacity of civil protection structures at grassroots level**. Civil protection committees exist at district, area and village levels and are responsible for coordinating disaster risk reduction interventions. However, most of them lack capacity; both human and material, to better manage disaster risk reduction and response interventions.
2. **Include disaster risk management in primary, secondary, tertiary and other** **training institutions’ curricula**. The inclusion of disaster risk management in the curricula, starting from primary school level, would ensure that children grow up with an understanding of impacts of disasters and what can be done to reduce the impacts. At the tertiary level, this would ensure the availability of trained personnel to manage disaster risk reduction programmes within the country.
3. **Research and pilot locally appropriate and sustainable technologies and approaches that enhance disaster resilience and climate change adaptation.**

The strategy would involve carrying out research in-country on appropriate disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation technologies and approaches. The identified technologies and/or approaches would then be piloted in selected districts across the country.

1. **Strengthen preparedness capacity for effective response and recovery at all levels.**
2. **Capacity building in disaster risk management for officers and stakeholders from different sectors from national to community level.**
3. **Strengthening coordination with civil society organizations and other stakeholders in disaster risk management.**

In conclusion, I would like to indicate that the Government of Malawi remains committed to implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action despite the challenges being experienced.

**I thank you all.**