

SPEECH BY H.E. THE RIGHT HON THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER OF THE KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND, MR. THEMBA NHLANGANISO MASUKU DURING THE THIRD SESSION OF THE GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION FOR 8-13 MAY, 2011, IN GENEVA.

Madam Chairperson

Honourable Ministers

Distinguished Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

Madam Chairperson,

1. It is my pleasure and honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Kingdom of Swaziland. On the outset, I wish to convey the greetings and best wishes from His Majesty King Mswati III and Head of State of Swaziland to this August Assembly. I also wish to thank most sincerely the Swiss Government, the organizers of this Global Platform for the good arrangements and excellent facilities put at our disposal for this meeting.
2. Listening to previous speakers on today's subject, you will agree that this Session is critical not only for small countries like my own country, Swaziland, but, for all countries since they are all prone to natural disasters. The Session provides us with a unique opportunity to articulate and advance a strategic and systematic approach to reducing vulnerabilities' and risks of hazards that our countries are exposed to. Further, it will help us to assess the progress we have achieved in identifying ways of building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters in the thematic areas established by the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015.
3. Madam Chairperson, disasters are indiscriminately posing a great challenge to all nations and communities of the world. Disasters include, but are not limited to deadly earthquakes, as has sadly been witnessed in Japan, Haiti , New Zealand to mention but a few, and the regrettable tornados that devastated the United States of America recently as well as drought and floods in different parts of the world. Madam Chairperson, all these events have affected millions of lives and economies. Such events have demonstrated that disaster risk is increasingly of great global concern and that their actions and impact are felt beyond borders and regions.
4. The Hyogo Framework for Action Of 2005-2015 stresses the importance of disaster risk reduction being underpinned by a more pro-active approach to informing, motivating and involving people in all aspects of disaster risk reduction in their own



local communities as the panelists have already alluded to. It focuses on five main thematic areas which are: governance; risk identification, assessment, monitoring and early warning; knowledge management and education; reducing underlying risk factors; and preparedness for effective response and recovery.

5. Madam Chairperson, may I report the progress that the Kingdom of Swaziland has made in these thematic areas:

#### **A) GOVERNANCE, LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK**

6. Swaziland has promulgated the Disaster Management Act of 2006 which draws largely from the Disaster Management Policy formulated in 1999 and reviewed in 2010 with the aim of aligning it with Hyogo Framework of Action, SADC Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction and the National Development Strategy.

7. The Disaster Management Act of 2006, has enabled Swaziland to institutionalize disaster risk reduction by establishing the National Disaster Management Agency which is housed under my Office and tasked with promoting an integrated and coordinated system of disaster management focusing on decreasing vulnerability and increasing preparedness and mitigation. To enhance its effectiveness, the Agency is in the process of establishing a national platform for disaster risk reduction which would be composed of focal points from Government Ministries, municipalities, civil society, the private sector and disaster management communities.

#### **B) RISK IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT, MONITORING AND EARLY WARNING**

8. To prepare for the ever changing climatic conditions, Swaziland uses early warning systems for weather and climate hazards through the Southern African Regional Outlook Forum and the country's meteorological services. In the health sector, the Ministry of Health has established a centre for health emergency preparedness and response which has developed an Early Warning System through an integrated national emergency medical call centre (977). This is a centralized multi-media contact centre for operations aimed at managing immediate disease notification, disease surveillance and immediate response 24hrs.

9. Community capacity building for national risk assessment has been undertaken in collaboration with UNDP, Swaziland. The national risk assessment tools were customized and tested at the local level and piloting of these tools has been carried out at one of the 55 political constituencies in the Kingdom. The results show that this is a good tool that will be extended countrywide.

#### **C) KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND EDUCATION**

10. Madam Chairperson, to create awareness on disaster risk reduction, Swaziland has produced educational materials to be used in schools' curricula. The National



Curriculum Centre is harmonizing it for incorporation into the school curriculum. To engage the community, it is indeed critical to enhance their local knowledge by educating and informing them.

#### **D) REDUCING UNDERLYING RISK FACTORS**

11. In an endeavor to reduce underlying risk factors on men, women and children, Swaziland has conducted a study on socio-economic and environmental impacts of disasters, aimed at probing the underlying risk factors of disasters on the targeted gender groups in the Country. The Ministry of Health has already integrated the outcome of this study in their emergency preparedness and response strategy which I have already alluded to.

#### **E) PREPAREDNESS FOR EFFECTIVE RESPONSE AND RECOVERY**

12. To prepare for effective response and recovery, Swaziland has strengthened the capacity of sectors such as health emergency preparedness and response on development and implementation of contingency plans. Particular focus has been placed on cholera, A/H1N1 influenza and meningitis contingency plans have been developed and implemented. In addition, Swaziland has developed a contingency plan for wild fires and is currently awaiting implementation.

13. In 2008/2009, Swaziland conducted a national drought early recovery needs assessment with gender focus and a national early recovery strategy framework. It also conducts annual vulnerability assessments to determine the food security situation in the country and consequently the number of people who may encounter the challenge of food insecurity.

#### **CHALLENGES:**

14. Madam Chairperson despite the progress Swaziland has made on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework of Action, there are a number of challenges which are limiting our capacity to fulfill the objectives of the Hyogo Framework Action. These include:

- The need to strengthen the institutional capacity of the national disaster management agency; and
- Lack of adequate human resources to coordinate efforts related to inter-ministerial inter-agencies
- Lack of material and financial resources to rollout community disaster risk management programmes at community and constituency levels.

15. In conclusion, the Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland would like to acknowledge the leading role played by UNDP in ensuring that the kingdom realize all



the projects under the thematic areas I have mentioned. I also want to thank on behalf of His Majesty's Government our development and cooperating partners, including the UN Agencies such as World Food Programme (WFP) who usually help us during the difficult times of food shortages.

I thank you.