**STATEMENTBY THE GAMBIAN DELEGATION AT THE SECOND PREPARATORY MEETING ON WCDRR 2015**

**UN Special Representative for Disaster risk reduction, Excellency Madam Wolstrom**

**Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen**

**All protocols duly observed**

I start with a repeat of congratulations to Finland and Thailand as Co-Chairs of the July preparatory forum, in which Switzerland and other countries too offered invaluable contributions.

**Excellencies**, Africa has remained unfairly very vulnerable to the ill effects of climate change, which it has an insignificant contribution to. Though the whole world is said to be generally responsible, the emission of greenhouse gases has the accusing finger on other nations. Certainly, blame cannot be branded on the African continent, given its tiny involvement in industrialisation.

Such is it that, we generally see ourselves as wearing the non-admired shoes of scapegoats. However, it is equally unfair to reject involvement, Earth being its tiny entity. The spark of a candle match has its micro contribution, even though in comparison to factory emission it is far less than a drop in the pacific. That aside, we have cars and generators. So whatever the argument, we are in the problem, though nowhere close to the middle of its cause. Nevertheless the remedy, so too the prevention of further trouble with the skies, demands our maximum contribution. It equally weighs on our shoulders to save the biodiversity, on which hinges human survival.

Highly committed Gambia will continue to give top priority to the implementation of all plans, not least the Hygo Framework for Action, which occupies centre stage in the whole fight against weather-based disaster. We have put in place all it takes to make it work, thanks to the very existence of the Hygo framework, will, and support from partners.

For glue to the significance we attach to it, Disaster Management is placed under the highest office of the land, its Council chaired by the President of the republic himself. No doubt, issues of it are integrated in the highest facets of national policies and plans.

I find it fitting to make mention of strides in the collective effort against disasters.

There is EU support in drainage sanitation and waste management, for which project seven hotspots have been identified. This followed the severe 2012 floods, which badly affected over 40,000 people; the meaning being wholesale economic loss for the whole nation.

The Gambia Government is aware that 2014 marks the end of the four-year “Step-Up” (HFA) Campaign on Disaster Reduction, which raises awareness and positive advocacy. Significant in its implementation is partnership, reasons for the President’s directive to constitute a body tasked with coordinating and monitoring the implementation of Post 2015 HFA, whose final treatment is scheduled for Sendai, Japan, in March 2015. This body will help the National Platform monitor progress and put in place realistic and achievable targets from 2015 on to be guided by the current under review Strategic Action Plan document.

The institutional frameworks (Disaster Act of 2008, the Policy and Strategy Action Plan documents) have been reviewed for possible harmony of the three, and in line with the HFA. The initial Act of 2008 and other documents however, fail to take on board the issues of Climate Change Adaptation, which needs to be integrated into the government policies, planning and strategies, at all levels. Mainstreaming of disaster into our government policies and planning processes has become a priority for the Government of the Gambia.

Excellencies, on the sombre note of the current EBOLA crisis, I wish to sound note of the adverse effects on the whole region. The Gambia has taken proactive measures to avoid the menace, thanks to support from all, including the United Nations; particularly the World Health Organisation. The Government of the Gambia has taken a leading proactive role by quickly developing the National EBOLA Response Plan, with support from partners; both local and international. The government has also provided financial support for purchase of some equipment and partners are providing similar support to fill existing gaps.

But even though the country is EBOLA free, panic created by the media has caused a significant reduction in tourism revenue, which represents 8.5% of the national economy. As of today this time, The Gambia is EBOLA FREE.

It is easy to call it irrelevant to this forum, having nothing much, if any, to do with weather. Nonetheless, it is important to give it a good measure of consideration; to at least avoid the diversion of effort to that direction.

Back to weather-related disasters, it is my hope that we find common ground.

Finally on the call for Sendai, the President of the Republic of the Gambia is highly committed to attending the Sendai Meeting in March 2015 provided the forum is held at the level of the heads of state of governments.

Thank you and see you all in Sendai in March 2015.