



UNISDR
The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

**6th Session of the Africa Regional Platform on
Disaster Risk Reduction
Implementing Sendai Framework in Africa**

Address by

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22 November 2016

14 00 hrs

InterContinental Resort, BalACLava, Mauritius

**Excellencies,
Colleague Ministers and Parliamentarians,
National Disaster Risk Reduction Focal Points,
Development and Humanitarian Partners,
Representatives of Major Groups,
Distinguished Guests,
All Protocols observed,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good afternoon and welcome to Mauritius.

42 I am pleased to be amidst you today for the **6th Session of the Africa Regional Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction**. It is indeed an honour for the Government of Mauritius to host this meeting, the more so after the unanimous endorsement of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction by the UN General Assembly last year. I would like to extend a warm welcome to all our overseas delegates and I wish them a pleasant stay on our island.

I would also like to seize this opportunity to **convey my sincere appreciation and gratitude** to the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the African Union Commission, the Southern African Development Community as well as the Government of Japan, the European Commission and International Union for

Conservation of Nature for their invaluable support in the lead up to this Conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During the past decades, the **global disaster risk reduction and management architecture has evolved from a highly scientific discipline to a multidisciplinary one** focusing on resilience building *via* broad-based collaborative partnerships. The '*1990 – 1999 International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction*' was instrumental in making all stakeholders work cohesively for better understanding and respond to disasters.

From thereon, successive '*World Conferences on Natural Disasters*' have strengthened the learning curve on disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Both the '*Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World*' and the '*Hyogo Framework for Action*' have consolidated the culture of prevention.

Likewise, the adoption of the '*Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030*' marks yet another historical milestone in ensuring the continuity towards disaster-resilient development. **Moreover, the timely implementation of the Sendai Framework will be key in the overall achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** including the Addis Ababa

Action Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

On the Continent, the implementation of the 2003 Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Extended Programme of Action (2006-2015) have been highly contributory in our quest to advance disaster risk reduction, build resilience and promote sustainable development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite the global and regional momentum to build resilience, the number of natural disasters is on the rise. **Aggravated by climate change, disasters now represent genuine threats to our sustainable development aspirations.**

Indeed, besides immediate physical destruction, disasters have enduring effects on communities, security of livelihoods, economies, infrastructure and other assets. **Our countries cannot afford that hard-earned development gains are shattered at the single strike of a natural calamity.**

The UN Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction (2015) disclosed that economic losses from earthquakes, tsunamis, cyclones and flooding have reached a yearly average of **250 to 300 Billion USD** and this figure is projected to **rise to 415**

Billion USD by 2030. For Small Island Developing States like Mauritius, escalating disaster losses pose an existential threat. It is forecasted that SIDS may lose on average 20 times more of their capital stock annually due to disasters.

The picture is equally bleak for Africa. Droughts are a perennial problem, while frequent floods disrupt the lives of millions across many countries.

According to the '*Status of Disaster Risk Reduction in Africa Report (2013)*', **between 2011 and 2013, 147 disasters** have been recorded, with an estimated **economic loss of 1.3 Billion USD**. Unfortunately, it is always the poorest nations who face the highest brunt given the lack of information, early warning systems, risk governance and civil protection mechanisms to respond and recover.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Against such a backdrop, we can no longer advocate that Business-As-Usual will provide effective and efficient solutions to sensibly manage the interlocking issues associated with natural disasters.

Therefore, to curb vulnerability and strengthen the capacity of countries to recover and leap forward, the four priorities for action

identified in the Sendai Framework need to be mainstreamed in our respective national programmes on disaster risk reduction. Indeed, it is crucial that we:

- Thoroughly understand all dimensions of disaster risk;
- Strengthen disaster risk governance at all levels and across all sectors;
- Invest more in disaster risk reduction programmes to build resilience; and
- Reinforce disaster preparedness for more effective response, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

In this regard, the Africa Regional Platform is an important forum to assess progress in the implementation of the Sendai Framework, to ensure that policy directives therein are domesticated and mainstreamed, and that knowledge and experiences are shared.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to share with you how Mauritius, being a tropical island and prone to cyclones and other natural catastrophes, has been coping with such situations. Resilience to destructive cyclones, prolonged droughts and very recently flash floods has been built over time with the adoption of precautionary measures. For instance, since the mid-1940's, overcoming the risk of cyclones has remained a top priority so much so that today above 90% of

the housing stock comprises cyclone-proof concrete buildings. Similarly, cyclone and drought-resistant sugarcane varieties have been developed through decades of R&D to make the sugar sector more resilient and adaptive to the new environment.

In fact, we have progressively, with our limited resources, developed our capacity to reconstruct infrastructure and restore essential utility services so that in the aftermath of disasters, the economic machinery is back on track very rapidly.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this vein, the Government of Mauritius has left no stone unturned in domesticating the recommendations emanating from successive DRR Conferences and has adopted a comprehensive and integrated approach to risk management. The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre was set up in 2013 as the lead organisation for coordinating and monitoring disaster risk reduction and management activities.

A National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act was promulgated this year, whereby clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of all key actors involved in DRR Management. Furthermore, this legal framework also outlines disaster response operations, empowers the National Crisis Committee to take

decisive and timely actions, and ensures DRR mainstreaming at all levels.

Moreover, Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Committees have also been set up in each Local Authority, where disaster risk analysis and vulnerability assessment, education and public awareness programmes, trainings, drills and simulation exercises are regularly undertaken.

In addition to the above, we have also undertaken a comprehensive risk and vulnerability mapping exercise for Mauritius and developed plans for disaster preparedness, mitigation, prevention, relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities.

An Early Warning System for storm and tidal surges has also been developed to ensure that coastal communities have timely alert of possible incoming surges for their safe evacuation. We are now in the process of setting up a multi-hazard early warning and an emergency alert system to provide more accurate and timely advice to the general public and key stakeholders.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Past events and future threats call for the need to integrate climate change adaptation, DRR and management strategies. In

this endeavour, Mauritius is investing more in climate-resilient infrastructure such as improved drainage systems, elevated roads and larger reservoirs.

In fact, Mauritius is investing more than 2% of its GDP, that is approximately 230 Million USD annually on climate change measures. Once more this year, the national budget has provided for a series of measures in the fields of renewable energy, sustainable transport, smart agriculture, ocean economy and water. We expect these measures to have twin contributions in addressing climate change impacts as well as in reducing disaster risks.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Africa Regional Platform provides a unique opportunity to all countries to share experiences and take stock of achievements while concurrently finding ways and means to address remaining goals, gaps and challenges. I hope that during the next three days, we will be able to capture the key priorities of our respective countries such as the need for robust legislative frameworks, the establishment of national disaster loss databases, the setting up of national platforms for DRR or the need to improve emergency monitoring and forecasting tools, early warning systems and overall preparedness.

Furthermore, other key deliverables of this meeting will be the alignment of the Africa Programme of Action with the Sendai Framework and the elaboration of Africa's position prior to the 5th Session of Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, to be held next year in Mexico.

It is therefore imperative that we produce a result-oriented document. The latter should not be a long list of aspirations and intentions, but instead should clearly reflect our goals, needs and priorities so as to send a clear and strong signal that DRR is a strategic priority for Africa.

Before ending, I would once more welcome you to Mauritius. I wish you a very pleasant stay. I hope that you will be able to take some time out of your busy schedule to visit our beautiful island and enjoy the legendary Mauritian hospitality.

On this note, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have now the pleasure and honour to declare this sixth session of the Africa Regional Platform (AFRP) for Disaster risk Reduction open.

I thank you for your attention and I wish you fruitful deliberations.