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The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

## **SADC Ministerial Meeting for Ministers Responsible for Disaster Risk Management**

OPENING CEREMONY.

Address by

**HON. ALAIN WONG YEN CHEONG, MSK**

Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms

Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development, and Disaster and Beach  
Management

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Colleague Ministers from the SADC Region,  
National Disaster Risk Reduction Focal Points,  
Officials of the SADC Secretariat,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning,

I am pleased to be in your midst today for the Opening Ceremony of the SADC Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Risk Management. It is indeed an honour for the Government of Mauritius to partner with the SADC Secretariat in hosting this strategic meeting to deliberate on the *'Draft SADC Disaster Preparedness and Response Strategy and Fund'*. As you are aware, the SADC Secretariat has worked relentlessly to bring us together and I would like to express my deep appreciation for this gesture.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The timing of today's meeting could not be more fitting, given the intense discussions we had earlier this week. Indeed, during the 6<sup>th</sup> Africa Regional Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction, all stakeholders have endeavoured in reviewing progress achieved and aligning the Africa Programme of Action with the Sendai Framework. Africa's Position for the 2017 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction was crafted after extensive multi-stakeholder consultations.

Moreover, the 5<sup>th</sup> High-Level Meeting held yesterday, was instrumental in adopting the outcomes of the Africa Regional Platform and the Ministerial Declaration emanating from these meetings will now be submitted to the African Union Summit for adoption.

On this note, Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to share with you some key issues stemming from these two meetings.

- A new Africa Programme of Action (2016 – 2020) will guide multi-hazard management of disaster risks in development

processes at all levels as well as within and across all sectors in line with the four key focus areas of the Sendai Framework.

- The functions, roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders – from the African Union Commission, its policy organs and platforms; UN Organisations; Regional Economic Communities & Implementation Centres; National and Local Governments to Major Groups, have been clearly delineated for coordinated and systematic implementation of disaster risk reduction programmes at strategic levels and on the ground.
- To further support resilience, critical issues like Urban Disaster Risk Management, Climate Risk Management as well as increased investment and expansion of insurance to support post-disaster recovery and reconstruction have also been integrated. Another important outcome is the setting up of a Monitoring and Reporting Framework with generic indicators and timeframes to assess progress at all levels.

- Last and most importantly, a matrix that clearly defines the specific activities, priorities and actions to be undertaken in Disaster Risk Management in Africa and all stakeholders have to strictly abide by it for effective domestication of the Sendai Framework at regional, sub-regional, national and local levels.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have all witnessed that frequent natural disasters and unprecedented climate change are becoming significant game changers in the SADC sub-region. In fact, exposure to natural and climate-related disasters has increased faster than vulnerability has decreased. Against this backdrop, the hard-earned gains in our sub-region are increasingly being threatened and it is always the poorest and most vulnerable who are being disproportionately affected.

To make matters worse, our countries are not on the same level playing field as regards Disaster Risk Reduction and management. Most often institutional and legal frameworks for national disaster



management are weak. The lack of information and knowledge management systems seriously hinder comprehensive risk assessments and analysis. At times, disaster risk management is downright overlooked, under-funded and uncoordinated, thus generating new risks and a steady rise in disaster-related losses.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite the gaps and challenges that hinder progress in achieving DRR, our countries are sparing no efforts in striving to mainstream in national policies and planning strategies.

For instance, Mauritius strengthened its national DRR institutional framework by setting up the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre in 2003 and reinforced the legal setup by promulgating the resultant Act earlier this year.

In addition to outlining disaster response mechanisms and delineating the roles and responsibilities of all DRR actors at central level, this

piece of legislation also decentralises DRR. It empowers Local Authorities to undertake risk analysis and vulnerability assessment as well as to act in the event of disasters. I wish to add that since last year, some 50 simulation exercises *vis-à-vis* testing our preparedness and response to floods, tsunamis and landslides, have been undertaken.

Climate change is also being mainstreamed in development planning and each year the national budget provides for a series of measures for mitigation of and adaptation to climate change across a range of sectors, such as renewable energy, water, ocean economy, agriculture, transport, just to name a few.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The SADC Secretariat has always been at the forefront in addressing issues of strategic priority to the sub-region and is among the Regional Economic Communities to translate the African Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy into action.

As such, the adoption of the *'Draft SADC Disaster Preparedness and Response Strategy and Fund'* will be an integral part of global and regional efforts deployed to enhance resilience in line with the objectives of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

In a nutshell, the *SADC Disaster Preparedness and Response Strategy and Fund* will be instrumental in strengthening preparedness and response for early recovery in the SADC region by 2030. The Strategy and Fund will be anchored in the culture of prevention, safety and resilience building and it is our hope that social, economic, cultural and natural capitals of SADC countries will be protected.

It is also imperative that we gear our efforts towards the three identified priorities, namely:

- Understanding risk & disaster management information systems;
- Strengthening disaster preparedness and response planning; &



- Establishing the regional disaster preparedness and response fund.

On this note, I invite you all to deliberate on the key elements of the *Draft SADC Disaster Preparedness and Response Strategy and Fund*, especially on the principles guiding the Fund, that is the scope, source of funds as well as other aspects. It is critical that we finalise the draft report for onwards presentation to SADC Ministers of Finance and Investment at their meeting in March 2017.

With these words, I have the honour to declare today's meeting open and wish everyone fruitful discussions.

Thank you for your attention.