**GOVERNMENT STATEMENT - REPUPLIC OF THE GAMBIA AT THE UNISDR GLOBAL PLATFORM CONFERENCE ON DRR, CANCUN MEXICO, 22 - 26 MAY 2017**

* **Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Disaster Risk Reduction**
* **Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

We want to thank and express our gratitude to the UNISDR for the opportunity to deliver this statement and for organizing this conference to discuss the Sendai Framework, monitor our progress as nations, and design solutions to our disaster risks problems. We also congratulate the new bureau for their elections.

This is a unique opportunity to inform this meeting and friends of The Gambia that we have a new government. Notwithstanding, our Agency are working closely with the Office of the Vice-President to ensure that they continue accepting that DRR remains an important priority for the new leadership. We have initiated high level discussions to orient them about the global, continental and regional commitments the state has pledged and how we should ensure that these commitments are inherited and maintained.

These orientations are intended to win their political will to consider the recommendations initiated from the legal and policy perspectives to grassroots mobilization to improve DRR in the country. These initiatives include but not limited to greater investment on early warning systems, improving infrastructure and technology, encouraging research on DRR and climate change. Essentially, we collaborating with our education sector to make quality DRR education more available and accessible to children and young people became necessary.

Given that the political transition may require some time to adjust existing development policies, we continue to encourage inclusive public-private partnership with the business community and as well strengthening the already positive relationship with the in-country UN systems, NGOs and community groups.

This way, we are tapping on their resources, including expertise, time and even financial contribution to support our DRR programs.

Mr. Chairperson, I want to inform that we are very much committed to improving early warning systems in our country. Such systems do exist in the Gambia and there is tremendous interest among international organizations to improve them. Our forecasting department has done a great job localizing this concept and convincing the locals that it is designed in tandem with our local cultures. In addition, we are also planning for joint reviews of our contingency plans to reflect new realities in our context.

Mr Chairperson, it may interest you know Gambia is a member of the African Risk Capacity (ARC); an African own initiative to deal with extreme weather events. We have signed and ratified the ARC Establishment Agreement in 2015. Government took positive step by taking Insurance premium on drought from the African Risk Capacity Limited to strengthen government response capacity. We have convinced the new regime about the benefits of this insurance scheme as it will improve our food security, response and resilience capacity in case of a drought. It is also important to emphasize that the training and skill transfer package offered through the ARC scheme to local officials across several sectors is ideal to build a stronger and multi-sectoral approach to risk management and governance.

In conclusion Mr. Chairperson, our efforts as a country focuses on increasing awareness on DRR at all levels; investing in disaster reduction and resilience, risk insurance among others. Let me commend the UN systems, the EU, the People and Government of Japan. On specific terms, EU has funded a project to improve Drainage, Sanitation and Waste Management in the country for the prevention of flooding. The People and Government of Japan provided equipment grant for the Gambia. These are huge bi-lateral gains and The Gambia is ready and committed to achieving the targets of Sendai Framework on DRR as soon as possible.

Thank you.