

**COUNTRY STATEMENT PRESENTED AT THE WORLD  
CONFERENCE ON DISASTER REDUCTION (W.C.D.R) HELD  
AT KOBE HYOGO JAPAN 18<sup>TH</sup> – 22<sup>ND</sup> JANUARY 2005 BY THE  
SWAZILAND DELEGATION**

Your Excellency Chairman of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction.

Your Excellency distinguished representative of the United Nations.

Distinguished representative of the Government of Japan.

Your Excellencies members of the Diplomatic Missions.  
Distinguished Delegates Ladies and Gentlemen.

May I on behalf of the Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, His Majesty King Mswati III, His Majesty's Government and the people of the Kingdom of Swaziland, take this opportunity to extend to you Mr. President, Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates, very warm regards and good wishes from His Majesty the King and the people of the Kingdom of Swaziland for the success of this historic meeting.

On behalf of my delegation, I would like to extend to you Mr. Chairman our sincere gratitude for the very warm welcome and the splendid facilities that we have enjoyed since our arrival in Kobe, this beautiful City of Japan.

May I also extend our sincere gratitude to our many international friends, including the various organs of the United Nations System, for the different forms of assistance, both financial and in kind, that

has enabled the Kingdom of Swaziland, since the last conference ten years ago, to be able to address the ravaging disasters that have visited Swaziland since the last World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction held in Yokohama ten years ago.

Having said that Mr. President permit me to report that as country my delegation is encouraged by Swaziland's high level political commitment towards disaster reduction, as a consequence of which, we now have appropriate institutional structures, which include a National Disaster Management Plan and Policy, presented by the Deputy Prime Minister, and unanimously approved by the Cabinet. Soon after the Plan and after extensive consultations, a Disaster Management Bill was prepared and was submitted to Parliament before the end of the last session. All these institutional measures draw extensively from The Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action.

In order to effectively manage the different aspects of disasters and while we await the Disaster Act an ad hoc multi-sector body, the National Disaster Task Force, was established to co-ordinate the various ministerial and Non-Governmental disaster programmes, with the basic aim of risk reduction which include inter-alia environmental programmes, water resource management, agriculture and land use planning, health issues with special emphasis on the H.I.V/AIDS pandemic, development planning and poverty alleviation. Guided by the international risk reduction guidelines as embraced in the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action, as well as the Johannesburg Plan of implementation of the World Summit of Sustainable Development,

Swaziland with the help of its international friends has made some positive and significant achievements

The Disaster Management Bill, which should soon receive Parliamentary approval aims among other things at setting up structures that will develop effective performance standards for disaster management, co-ordinating, facilitating and monitoring the implementation of disaster management policies, plans, programmes and procedures, as well as promoting effective disaster management, in particular strengthening capacity building programmes.

As a result of increasing awareness in disaster management, on going sectoral plans and initiatives already incorporate the concept of risk reduction in the various areas such as poverty alleviation, land and water resource management. One of the important and useful structures in environmental management is the Swaziland Environmental Authority, which has made commendable strides in environmental protection, drawing up and implementing an environmental action plan etc. In the area of poverty reduction. Swaziland has already established a poverty reduction strategy and a poverty-monitoring unit to address the ravaging poverty.

Some of the vital components of our disaster management plan is the reduction of vulnerability to disasters, capacity building, disaster prevention and preparedness and the development of resilience at national regional, and community levels, strengthening our fledgling early warning system, including the local capacity for vulnerability assessments and the promotion of

improved livelihoods. Considerable benefit has been derived from the SADC Regional Early Warning Unit (REWU) which coordinates the activities of our National Early Warning Unit (NEWU) as well as providing support and backstopping to international assessment missions and consultancies.

Faced with a devastating H.I.V/AIDS pandemic that saw infection numbers rising drastically from below 20% to nearly 40%, the Swaziland Government established a special National Emergency Response Council on H.I.V/AIDS (NERCHA) charged with the immediate and urgent responsibility to specifically do everything possible to address the ravaging pandemic. With the assistance and co-operation of international organizations, as well as members of the United Nations System, NERCHA is doing a commendable job addressing the pandemic at all levels from the rural grass roots level throughout the Urban Centres, implementing programmes most of which have begun to yield positive results.

The biggest and most devastating disaster that has persistently ravaged Swaziland is the "Drought Disaster" which has been aggravated by the poverty situation and the H.I.V/AIDS pandemic, all of which have made it impossible for disaster victims to cope, thus creating a serious humanitarian crisis of immense proportions. Food insecurity has been at the very core of factors that increase risk and vulnerability.

In addressing this humanitarian crisis, Swaziland would like to extend its gratitude to our international friends and donors, as well as to members of the United Nations system who have all rallied

around the country providing various forms of assistance both financial and in kind. For the last four years Swaziland has been faced with a serious food shortage and has benefited tremendously from professional crop and Food Assessments followed by food aid targeted to those communities in the severely drought stricken areas of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

Swaziland has been deeply saddened by the devastation and the death of thousands of people both young and old that were killed by the Tsunami that left a trail of destruction as it destroyed cities and villages in all the countries that were affected.

In conclusion Mr. Chairman, may I once again congratulate your Committee and all the organizers of the important World Conference on Disaster Reduction which I hope will come out with strategies and programmes that will guide the international community as we address the various ravaging disasters affecting our countries.

**DR B. M. NSIBANDZE**  
**CHAIRMAN NATIONAL DISASTER TASK FORCE**