

**“Risk Sensitive Development for Community Resilience”**



**Statement by**

**H.E. Lyonpo Dawa Gyaltsen**

**Minister of Home and Cultural Affairs**

**Royal Government of Bhutan**

**(The Leader of Bhutan Delegation)**

**New Delhi: 2<sup>nd</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> November 2016**

**Mr. Chairman,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. It is a great pleasure for my delegation and me to participate at the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) in this historic city of New Delhi. I, on behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, would like to express our deepest appreciation to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India for hosting this important event, and for the warm and generous hospitality extended to us.
2. This Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction is most significant as it is the first Conference being held following the adoptions of the 'Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction at the Third World Conference in Sendai, Japan in March 2015, and the '2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' at the historic United Nations Summit in September 2015 in New York.
3. This Conference provides opportunity to take stock of the progress we have made following the last AMCDRR, and on implementation of Sendai Framework. It provides us an avenue to discuss ways to effectively prepare for and respond to disasters and build upon the achievements made thus far to attain the ultimate goal of sustainable development.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

4. Despite the efforts and initiatives of individual countries, and regional and international organizations, occurrence of disasters appear to be on the rise globally. Disaster risks and vulnerabilities go beyond national and geographic boundaries. Every year, millions of people lose their lives to disasters and millions more are affected severely. Over the last decade, more than 1.5 billion people have suffered from the direct and indirect effects of disasters which caused an enormous economic loss.
5. In Bhutan's context, risk of natural disasters has been exacerbated significantly by climate change. In the recent past, Bhutan has been experiencing extreme climatic phenomena and growing instances of natural disasters such as flash floods, landslides, windstorms and glacial outburst floods (GLOF).
6. Given the fragile mountain ecosystem in the Himalayan Mountains falling in a high seismic zone, Bhutan is prone to devastating earthquakes if not adequately prepared. Bhutan witnessed two major earthquakes in the past six years, one in September 2009 and another in 2011. Most recently, in the months of July and August this year, Bhutan suffered from disastrous floods in Southern Bhutan which resulted in extensive damage to infrastructure and livelihoods of many people.

## Mr. Chairman

7. In view of impending threats from disasters, Bhutan has made sustained efforts towards enhancing our disaster management and risk reduction capacities. In 2013, the Disaster Management Act was enacted by the Parliament of Bhutan, providing a legal structure, to establish and strengthen instituted capacity for disaster management; mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction and to provide for an integrated and coordinated disaster management targeting community participation.
8. In terms of the institutional framework, the Department of Disaster Management (DDM) under the Ministry of Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs serves as the national coordinating agency and the secretariat to the National Disaster Management Authority, the highest decision making body on disaster management chaired by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, and supported by the various Ministries, agencies and local disaster management committees.

## Mr. Chairman

9. Following the AMDCRR in Thailand in 2014, and the adoption of the Sendai Framework in 2015, Bhutan formulated the Disaster Risk Management Strategy. The Strategy aims at synthesizing the policy drivers and, progress being made in DRM, emerging issues, challenges and lessons learnt from response and management of the past disasters. The priority areas of the Strategy are broadly guided by the four priority actions contained in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.
10. In follow up to the Sendai Framework, Bhutan hosted the “12<sup>th</sup> Regional Consultative Committee (RCC) Meeting on Disaster Management” in June 2015 in Thimphu. The two outputs: RCC Action Plan 2015-2020, and the conclusion of phase IV of Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation into Development (MDRD) Program Phase IV (2015-2020), significantly strengthened regional mechanisms to implement Sendai Framework.
11. In addition to these efforts by the Royal Government, it is with great pride that I share His Majesty the King of Bhutan's initiative in the establishment of the *De-Suung* or Guardians of Peace program. The program encourages citizens to contribute to a greater role of nation building through a spirit of volunteerism, community service, integrity and civil responsibility. All *De-Suup* undergo basic rescue and safety training. These De-Suups are expected to actively volunteering their services during disaster operations. We have witnessed the actions of the *De-Suup* volunteers who have positively contributed to government's efforts.

**Mr. Chairman**

12. As a Least Developing Country (LDC), Bhutan faces challenges arising from the lack of financial, human and technical resources to deal with the impacts.
13. Nonetheless, we are committed to fulfilling the commitments of the AMCDRR, and the Sendai Framework to reduce disaster risk, to protect development outcome and to develop means to adapt to the impacts of disasters and climate change through risk informed development. While doing so, we look forward to working closely with our development partners for financial and technical support.
14. In conclusion, Bhutan will continue to be guided by the holistic development philosophy of Gross National Happiness, where our goal is not just development, but development that strives to provide an enabling environment that ensures the safety and well-being of every citizen from all forms of disaster.
15. I wish this landmark Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction a great success.

**Thank you and *Tashi Delek!***