**STATEMENT BY MINISTER JULY MOYO OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE AT THE GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION: GENEVA, SWITZERLAND; 13 - 17 MAY 2019**

**Chairperson**

**Excellencies**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

It gives me much pleasure to address you, on this occasion of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, a very important platform for us in the coordination of efforts around disasters. Coming as it does just two months after the devastation caused by Cyclone Idai, this Forum represents a great opportunity for us the affected countries to learn from others how best to move forward with building back better, stronger and more resilient infrastructure as we forge ahead with recovery.

The Government and people of the Republic of Zimbabwe will remain forever grateful for the gestures of goodwill as expressed in the outpouring of sympathies, monetary and material contributions from the international community at our greatest time of need. The disaster couldn’t have come at a worse time with the country having just launched a consolidated appeal for domestic and international assistance in the face of increased humanitarian needs occasioned by drought that affected the region.

Costs of reconstruction run into billions of dollars, and we are calling on the international community to assist us as we embark on long term recovery and reconstruction efforts to provide hope to the poor and vulnerable populations. As you will be aware, disaster risk reduction is a cross-cutting issue with a direct impact on many of the Sustainable Development Goals and the broader 2030 Agenda.

Chairperson,

It is important to state at this stage that the Government of Zimbabwe has fully embraced the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (Sendai Framework) through a National Plan of Action (NPA) covering the initial period 2016 – 2020, following which a more elaborate blueprint would be crafted.

Broad areas of focus linked to each Sendai Framework priority have been identified in the National Plan of Action. With regard to understanding disaster risk, that is Priority 1, the broad focus for the National Plan of Action is on hazard monitoring and strengthening of early warning systems, education and awareness programmes, including for the deaf and hard of hearing and for the visually impaired. With regard to strengthening disaster risk governance, that is Priority 2, our National Plan of Action has prioritised the upgrading of the institutional framework for disaster risk reduction. On investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience, that is Priority 3, we have placed our focus on the development of policies and strategies that promote resilience. In the area of enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and build back better in recovery, that is Priority 4, we have developed guidelines on optimal preparedness and early recovery with a focus on resilience.

Efforts to improve capacity to monitor hazards and impending hazardous events through space-based technologies were enhanced through a UN – Spider technical advisory visit to the country in 2018. It went a long way in identifying gaps and methodologies for enhancing and building on existing capacities.

Chairperson, Distinguished delegates,

On Priority area 2, a policy framework and a bill have been put in place to effectively provide for comprehensive disaster risk reduction strategies at all levels of governance. However, the attendant regulatory processes have lagged behind due to a crowded legislative agenda. This lack of significant progress has also negatively impacted on Priority 3 which requires coherent funding and risk transfer arrangements which can best be achieved through a robust institutional framework.

The country’s experiences with regard to Priority 4 have perhaps illustrated the interrelatedness and significance of the preceding priorities. A dynamic education and awareness programme prior and during the rainfall season enhanced readiness for Cyclone Dineo in 2017. A comprehensive flood risk study was fundamental in relocation plans of displaced communities. On the other hand, the unprecedented impacts of Cyclone Idai exposed deficits and gaps in mitigation and hazard monitoring capacity. An urgent review and analysis of resource needs on disaster risk management capacity must be undertaken taking advantage of the current heightened concern on climate change impacts.

Finally, Chairperson,

As I conclude, allow me to recall a policy recommendation once floated by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 2010, in the wake of the massive earthquake which devastated Haiti. UNCTAD then suggested that, given the scale of the natural disaster, the immediate recovery and reconstruction efforts on the affected country could be supported by the international community through an immediate moratorium on debt servicing, followed by debt cancellation. In addition to the moratorium on debt relief, the global community could also intervene in the form of derogations from international obligations in trade, finance and other areas. Such a decisive international response can help disaster ravaged countries with the policy space necessary to redirect limited resources towards relief, recovery and reconstruction.

My delegation is presenting this policy recommendation for the Global Platform to reconsider, and perhaps adopt as one of its outcomes, because if we fail to address the issue of the external debt, as well as trade and other burdensome international obligations of disaster ravaged low income developing countries, such countries will continue to bleed at a time when they deserve international support for relief, sustainable recovery and reconstruction. While we acknowledge that the history of natural disasters is littered with ad hoc relief measures to deal with challenges faced by the affected countries, perhaps what we need going forward is a more predictable global response, like a mechanism for a moratorium on debt servicing, debt cancellation is some areas, as well as derogation from other international obligations.

Chairperson, Distinguished delegates,

In taking such a holistic approach, working together and joining forces, we surely increase the international economies of scale and stock of our DRR capabilities, unlike if we are left to our own individual devices and limited resources.

I thank you Chairperson