



NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT CENTRE
Male', Republic of Maldives

Statement from the Rep of Maldives

By Mr. Mohamed Zuhair

Minister of State, Ministry of Defence and National Security, Maldives

Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction 2018

Excellences, Heads of Delegations, distinguished guests and participants;

It is an honor and a great privilege for me today to give this statement on behalf of the Maldives, to update you on our progress and achievements since the adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015- 2030. Let me begin by congratulating the Government of Mongolia for the remarkable arrangements being made here in Ulaanbaatar to host this Asian Ministerial Conference. It is a pleasure to come to your beautiful capital once again and to receive your warmest hospitality.

Excellences,

I come from an island nation that is highly dependent on a unique natural environment. Our entire economy, social wellbeing and our entire way of life depends on a very fragile yet extraordinary environment. The Maldivian archipelago of 1,192 small islands with over 80% of its land area less than 1 meter above mean sea-level is among the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Being among the lowest lying island nations in the world the frequency and severity of hydro-meteorological hazards are predicted to increase.

The small size and low elevation of the islands increases the vulnerability to coastal hazards. Extreme events have become more frequent over the past decades, while some events have led to significant livelihood and economic losses.

Besides the monsoonal floods, the rapid growth and urbanization and other technological hazards such as urban fires are on the rise. For an island nation with a population of 400,000, such challenges though considered “low risk” on a global scale can be “high risk” at a local scale.

The Maldives faces ‘high frequency - low impact’ disasters, slow onset disasters that has a long-term consequence both on the livelihoods and the economy.

Excellences,

We remain hopeful for the existence of our islands. The Government of Maldives is committed and working tirelessly on taking innovative and calculated measures on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Recognizing the importance of coherence, the Government of Maldives is working on addressing these key challenges through multi-agency collaboration to implement and achieve the targets and goals of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement.

Taking note the importance of strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, significant work has been carried out in the past two years to mainstream and integrate disaster risk reduction within and across all sectors both locally and nationally. Efforts have been made to review and further develop as appropriate, national and local frameworks of laws, regulations and public policies to integrate and mainstream DRR.

We in the Maldives have been working on establishing partnerships, all inclusive, of public and private sector, civil society as well as with international actors in the area of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management. At home we are taking a multi-sectoral approach to ensure that DRR continues to be a subject of relevance and priority at all levels. For the first time we now have a National Emergency Operations Plan, a guiding document that lays out the framework for multi-agency coordination for effective and efficient emergency response in the Maldives.

Excellences;

In order to fully realize our vision of creating resilience, efforts have been made to further strengthen disaster information management systems in the country. Work is in progress for the establishment of a comprehensive disaster loss database and a GIS based risk management system. With the support of our partners, we are also working on setting up a nationwide backup early warning communication system.

Working on Target E, we have reviewed and redesigned the Community Based Disaster Risk Management Programme, the flagship initiative to increase local community resilience in the country. Through the programme we are working with local communities to develop Island Disaster Management Plans, establish local partnerships for risk reduction and to establish Community Emergency Response Teams.

Work is in progress to finalize a 5 year National Disaster Management Plan that is informed by the SFDRR. This national plan will outline all-inclusive risk reduction strategies and actions for the country, enabling line agencies to harmonize implementation and avoid duplication of resources.

Excellences,

As we discuss the importance of translating our commitments to actions, it is vital to note that small island states like the Maldives, and many others like us, require support and assistance to eliminate the challenges we face due to lack of available resources, both human and financial. To realize these challenges, a collective commitment and collaborated initiative is pivotal.

The government of Maldives will continue to lead the DRR dialogue, coordination, collaboration and partnership in the Maldives, ensuring that we create a risk informed, prepared and resilient environment.

I reaffirm our commitment to the global disaster risk reduction efforts. The Maldives does not take Disaster Risks lightly, and for us it is a matter of existence and continued survival.