

**SPEECH BY MARGARETA WAHLSTRÖM, SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION TO THE
SECOND AFRICA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION
EXPERT MEETING,
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Need for joint action and partnership in implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action
and the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction

Excellencies, Honourable Dr. Naomi Shaban, Minister of State for Special Programmes, Madame Rhoda-Peace, Commissioner, Rural Economy and Agriculture, Mr Moses Gitari, Acting Permanent Secretary, Ministry of State for Special Programmes, Distinguished Participants, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is an honour to be here with you today for Expert meeting in preparation for the Second African Ministerial Conference, a key event to renew the political commitment of the region to implement *The Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction*. This expert meetings serves to update, actualize and add if required to the important work you did in 2009 in drafting the Plan of Action that is now on the table. Important progresses have already been achieved in the region, in implementing both the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction and the *The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015* in the African context, as well as in promoting regional cooperation and strengthening regional mechanisms in the area of disaster risk reduction. Until today more than two dozen Sub-Saharan nations have established National Platforms for disaster risk reduction. National governments and sub-regional organisations such as Regional Economic Communities have reported progress on disaster risk reduction policies and programmes. In all, some 24 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have submitted official national reports that provide the important raw data and materials for both the Global Assessment Report on disaster risk and the Africa Status Report.

For all of these important steps toward sustainable responses to disaster reduction and mitigation, and for your commitment and contributions to the intent and determination of the Hyogo Framework for Action, I would like to express sincere appreciation on behalf of the UNISDR. Your work leads the way forward to more responsive risk reduction best practices and response mechanisms and provides valuable lessons that can assist us in meeting the challenges facing Africa now and in the days ahead.

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While some African countries have experienced rapid economic growth, others still struggle to achieve improvement of their lives and livelihoods. With high population growth rate; widespread poverty; environmental degradation; insufficient health outreach; and the world's most rapid growth of urban areas, the impact of disasters keeps increasing in cost to countries budgets and to people's livelihoods. Recurrent smaller scale disasters represent an even higher challenge for Governments as they represent regular high cost in Governments' budgets, The impact of climate change adds further stress to the need to introduce strategic measures to counter the impact of hazards. This is felt acutely in Africa with a long history of being prone to costly droughts and floods,

This year, at the 10th anniversary of the Millenium Development Goals, Governments will gather n UN Headquarters in September and review progress on achieving the MDGs. It is clear that Africa – and other parts of the world – will have difficulty achieving the goals of halving poverty and hunger for example. It is crucial to include risk reduction in national development plan, in particular poverty reduction strategies, land-use and human settlement strategies and related priority budgetary allocation, to use all instruments available to protect the investments made and not subject these to external chocks such as disasters. We encourage African leaders present with us today, to integrate DRR into national development plan,. DRR is a tool for short and medium term climate change adaptation action.

The results of the COP 15 in Copenhagen may appear meagre but for risk reduction there is good news. the Copenhagen Conference led to a general agreement that the Hyogo Framework can provide important guidance on how to adapt to climate change. That climate change impact, disaster risk, vulnerability and development are closely interdependent. These must be addressed and solved together. Risk reduction offers a triple win approach: Implementing DRR policies and programmes can limit the impacts of climate-related hazards, directly support adaptation to climate change, and help alleviate poverty. I encourage all African governments and organisations here present to continue advocating for DRR as a core strategy for climate change adaptation in the climate change talks leading to the next important Conference in Mexico City later this year.

I would also like to share with you two key activities for this year. Firstly, a **Mid-Term Review of the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action** to review with our partners worldwide how HFA has helped the progress on reducing risk midway through the period 2005 - 2015. A specific session with more detailed information and methodological approaches is scheduled tomorrow, the second day of this meeting and I hope you will take part in the session. The Mid-Tem Review is expected to identify constraints, successes and guide priority areas for work till 2015.

We hope this review will also be useful to inspire and motivate acceleration of implementation and thus support the proposed Plan of Action you will discuss in the next days..

A clear lesson that is coming out of relevant past disaster situations and recovery processes is the growing role and strong potential of local governments in disaster risk reduction work and the value of disaster management implementation of decentralization. UNISDR is launching

The third biennial World Campaign the **2010-2011 World Disaster Risk Reduction Campaign entitled “Making Cities Resilient – My city is getting ready!”**. This campaign will feature mayors and local government officials leading to establish and propose measures to make their city and municipality safer and more disaster resilient. In this context, hospitals and schools represent key community infrastructures of focus and, as recommended by the Global Platform 2009, I wish to urge African Governments to critically assess such vital infrastructures’ resilience to disasters by 2011 and to propose implementation national action plans to ensure safe schools and hospitals for all by 2015. A major initiative on “One Million Safe Schools and Hospitals” developed through the UNISDR system was just launched in the Philippines with high level political commitment and pledges made to ensure the safety of 58,000 schools at the country level. I wish to invite African Governments and the African Union to develop a similar initiative for Africa to support the valuable work undertaken to facilitate access for African girls and boys to education in a safe environment.

I am pleased to reiterate and pursue the ISDR partnership of United Nations organisations, civil society and intergovernmental organisations continued support to in Africa. The UN Secretary General Mr Ban Ki Moon has also strongly committed to the disaster risk reduction work and made this one of his central priorities for this year. He is supported by many UN organisation leaders in this endeavour. In order to achieve significant progress, we must also work with and through private sector to reduce the impact of disasters, as well as to mobilize social capacity of women, young people and all who can and will contribute.

In concluding , I would like to mention some of the **specific targets that were identified during the Second Session of the Global Platform** by the participating countries as catalysts for cutting deaths and economic losses brought on by disasters. I hope these targets may be useful as concrete indicators for achievements for Africa, and could assist in proposing a **concrete way forward** in order to fully operationalize the Africa Regional Strategy for DRR, the Programme of Action and the Hyogo Framework for Action. These targets are: (1) First, by 2010, establishment of clear national and international financial commitments to DRR, for example to allocate a minimum of

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10% of all humanitarian and reconstruction funding, at least 1% of development funding, and at least 30% of climate change adaptation funding to DRR; (2) Second, by 2011, a global structural evaluation of all schools and hospitals and by 2015 firm action plans for safer schools and hospitals developed and implemented in all disaster prone countries with DRR included in all school curricula by the same year; and (3) Third, by 2015, all major cities in disaster prone areas to include and enforce DRR measures in their building and land use codes.

Finally, I would like to extend my sincere **appreciation** to the Ministry of State for Special Programmes, Government of Kenya who is host these event, as well as the conference for ministers responsible for meteorology happening in this same conference centre, but also to our partners, in particular, the African Union Commission, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) of the World Bank to make these two events possible in Nairobi this week.

We hope that these two high level conferences will increase the pace and focus for implementation for action. I wish you all a fruitful discussion during this expert meeting.

It is time to invest and act immediately to make African continent more resilient to disasters.

Thank you.