

Country Statement by Shri Ashok Mangotra,
Secretary (Border management), Ministry of Home Affairs,
Government of India

at the

Fourth Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

[22 May 2013; Geneva]

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to participate in the 4th Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and to make this Country Statement on behalf of India.

2. Over the years, India has been actively pursuing a shift in its approach towards Disaster Management. This shift has been from the earlier relief centric approach of the past to a more holistic approach. The present approach attempts to encompass all facets including capacity building, early warning, community preparedness, response as well as post-disaster reconstruction in our process. Our country has taken long strides in several areas towards strengthening the legal, financial and institutional mechanisms, building response capacities, taking disaster risk reduction measures including sustainable reconstruction and recovery and launching innovative initiatives relating to Disaster Management. Enactment of the Disaster Management Act in 2005, formulation of the Disaster Management Policy in 2009, setting up of the Disaster Management Authorities at National, State and District levels, creation of a dedicated fund for Disaster Response, Establishment of a specialised National Disaster Response Force, setting up of a dedicated National Institute of Disaster Management for training, establishment of the National Emergency Operations Centre, Strengthening of our Fire Services and Amendment of the Civil Defence Act, 1968 to include Disaster Management in its ambit are some of our key achievements in this field. Recently, a comprehensive review of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 has been undertaken by the Government to further strengthen our institutions at National, Sub-national and local levels.

3. India has recently established a dynamic and vibrant forum in the form of the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction to enable decision makers, experts, Non-Government Organisations and International Organizations to come together on a common platform to share and shape our policies and practices in the field of DRR. The First Session of the National Platform has

been held recently and was inaugurated by our Hon'ble Prime Minister. This was an indication of the highest levels of political commitment that exist in our country towards DRR. But, we now need to drill down to ensure that this political commitment flows down to the lowest levels of our democratic set up which is the Panchayati Raj set-up. This should be one of the major areas of focus for the post-2015 scenario.

4. Hazard specific efficient early warning systems are the need of the hour and our country is in the process of putting these in place permanently, so that actionable information is available 24x7 in a language that is easily understood by the local communities. This point of communicating with the local communities in their own language has also been highlighted in the synthesis report prepared by the UNISDR for this conference. India is thus making concerted efforts towards integrating technology into our early warning systems, through a comprehensive 'National Emergency Communication Plan'. The attempt is to ensure real time dissemination of early warnings and information to the 'at risk' community and to the local authorities in local languages. Setting up of the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services and communication hubs by the Indian Space Research Organization, establishment of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure by the Survey of India to collect, compile, analyze and prepare value-added maps for use by various agencies in the field of Disaster Management and development of a National Agriculture Drought Assessment and Monitoring System, landslide risk analysis and state specific studies by Geological Survey of India and Micro-zonation studies in selected earthquake prone cities are some of our notable achievements over the past few years in the area of Disaster Communication.

5. There is an increased focus on mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction into development planning. The 12th Five Year Plan national document has included a separate portion on Disaster Management thus giving it a place of importance in our national planning process. Consistent efforts are being made to integrate DRR in a wide variety of programs and schemes both at the Federal and the Provincial levels. State Governments are encouraged to undertake hazard risk and vulnerability analysis to promote risk sensitive development. Our National Building Code has been revised by the National and Provincial Governments to ensure structural safety. Our Central Bank, the Reserve Bank of India has now issued a set of guidelines for ensuring disaster resistant construction of buildings and infrastructure being financed through banks and other lending institutions. However, compliance of safety guidelines remains a major challenge especially at the local levels.

6. Considering the propensity of the country to huge economic losses due to various disasters impact, the Government of India is working out a risk assessment and risk financing strategy. Many initiatives are underway with the help of international bodies. However, for this initiative to succeed, we need the help of worldwide experts who can help us draw up a strategy suitable to the size and vulnerability of our country. This should be another area of focus for the post 2015 scenario.

7. Climate Change has enormous implications for the natural resources and livelihoods of our people, especially those at the bottom of the developmental ladder. It will have wide-ranging effects on our environmental and socio-economic sectors. Various studies indicate that key sectors such as the Agriculture, Water, Natural Ecosystems, Biodiversity and Health are vulnerable to Climate Change risks. This calls for urgency of action in reducing vulnerability to adverse impacts of Climate Change and enhancing our Adaptive Capacities through sector-specific interventions and efforts. Here again, we would need the expertise and support of the developed countries. This should be another focus area for the future of DRR.

8. India is firmly committed to promoting regional cooperation in the field of Disaster Risk Reduction. We have been making concerted efforts in various regional fora including the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation for developing an emergency response system to deal with natural disasters in South Asia. We hope to work together with our regional countries to make our region as disaster resilient as is humanly possible. Strengthening the regional support arrangements should be another area for the post-2015 era.

9. Before concluding, let me reiterate our commitment to ex-ante disaster risk management initiatives and to mainstreaming its activities towards Disaster Risk Reduction by making it an integral part of our development process. India will continue its efforts to work as one global family, will facilitate regional cooperation and would remain in the forefront of the Global Movement for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Thank You.
