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REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES



Statement by the Minister of Defence and National Security Honourable Adam Shareef Umar
At the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction
New Delhi, India, 2-5 November 2016

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

Before I begin, allow me to congratulate the Government of India and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNSIDR) for hosting the Seventh Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR). I am honoured to participate in this important conference.

This conference is a milestone for us all, as we embark on achieving the vision of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the goals established by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Sendai Framework and the Sustainable Development Goals, along with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change are vital for the survival of the Maldives in the face of climate change and extreme disasters.

The Maldives is a low-lying island nation in the middle of the Indian Ocean. We have around 1,200 coral islands that, on average, lie just one meter above sea level. As a result, the islands are exceptionally fragile and vulnerable to climate change.

Over the past few years, the Maldives has been experiencing frequent hydro-meteorological and oceanic hazards. There has been an increase in the frequency of flooding caused by storms. It is likely that the effects of these hazards will get worse in the future.

In addition, climate change increases the risk of severe erosion and the degradation of our coastal environment and infrastructure. Not only would this cause devastating effects to the people and life on the islands, it also adversely impacts marine life. The ecosystem and natural environment of the Maldives are critical to the sustainability of the economy of the country, as well as the livelihoods of the Maldivian people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The actions we take today have a major and lasting impact on future generations. The scientific community has made it clear that climate change is real and that we are experiencing its effects. The correlation between climate change and extreme disasters is evident. Looking at the current trend, it is evident that we need holistic and innovative approaches to manage the risk of disaster. We need definite action at a global and regional level, to save vulnerable countries including the Maldives.

I believe that the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction is important for all the stakeholders in guiding us to take action to address this issue at a local, regional and global level. The framework provides a paradigm shift on the current approach for disaster management. Sendai Framework calls for us to understand and reduce risks through developmental work we do in our communities. It also emphasizes the importance of preparedness for effective response.

We need to ensure that disaster risk reduction policies are cohesive and appropriate in a world of increasing public-private investments. The tools that we develop through these regional platforms should encompass the goals of the Sendai Framework.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have much to learn from each other as we commit to implement the Sendai Framework and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Platforms such as this conference would enable participating countries to form strategic partnerships with a view of creating resilient communities. We have a lot to learn from countries in the region that have advanced in the area of disaster risk management. I take this opportunity to call upon all countries in the Asia region to set up a regional mechanism for knowledge sharing, where we can share best practices and the lessons we have learned from developmental initiatives.

I would also like to highlight the importance of maintaining regional coordination mechanisms in disaster response. Having in mind that the ASEAN region has successfully implemented the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, the SAARC countries have also formulated an agreement on rapid response for natural disasters. I call upon all SAARC member countries to recognize the importance of this regional mechanism. The Maldives extends its commitment for this initiative, and will work towards fast tracking the institutionalization of the SAARC rapid response agreement.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Maldives acknowledges the efforts of the UNISDR in promoting and working towards implementing the Sendai Framework. The Maldives is fully committed to this cause. The New Delhi Declaration that will be endorsed during this conference will stand testimony to this commitment. I sincerely hope that all participating countries will give their utmost commitment and support for the achievement of this vision.

Before I conclude, I would like to thank the Indian Government, especially Prime Minister His Excellency Narendra Modi, for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to us. The Maldives always recognizes the support and friendship extended by India and all countries in the region.

Thank You