



## **Remarks**

**by**

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**at**

**Plenary of the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction**

**16 March, Sendai, Japan**

Excellency Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by congratulating the Government of Japan and the people of Sendai for being wonderful hosts. I thank UNISDR for their dedication to make the conference a success.

Four years ago this region was hit hard by the East Japan Earthquake. And while the road to recovery is a long one, today this region and its people stand as a beacon of resilience.

As we meet here, the people and Government of Vanuatu are beginning the long and painful road to rebuild their lives, property and economy in the wake of the devastation left by tropical cyclone Pam.

Indeed, the category 5 cyclone Pam, affected parts of Solomon Islands and Tuvalu as well. The international community has already begun to mobilize to lend support and stand in solidarity with the government and people of Vanuatu.

These three island countries are not only SIDS, but they are also LDCs. That we are only beginning to hear of initial assessments of the extent of the damage now underscores the inherent vulnerabilities, including their isolation and remoteness, of these three SIDS and why particular attention needs to be accorded to these countries.

As the Secretary-General remarked two days ago in this hall, sustainability begins here in Sendai. Together with the Sendai Conference, the FfD, the post-2015 development agenda and the climate change processes, 2015 is shaping up to be an historic year for the United Nations.

My office is dedicated to advocate and mobilize support for the most vulnerable members of our family of nations, the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states, a collection of about a hundred countries whose collective population number over a billion.

There are multiple layers of constraints that they face. Their geographic location, the high levels of poverty and deprivation, impacts of climate change, such as desertification, melting glaciers, floods and sea-level rise, natural and slow onset disasters, rapid unplanned urbanization and capacity and resource constraints conspire to make disasters severe and debilitating for these vulnerable countries, seriously undermining their development prospects. As disasters are a big drag on poverty eradication efforts and sustainable development and climate change is compounding the situation dramatically, building resilience, early warning and risk reduction are therefore very much an integral part of their overall development strategy.

The Global Assessment Report found that for SIDS, their future disaster losses represent an existential threat for some. Besides loss of lives, the report states that compared to Europe and Other parts of Asia, SIDS are expected to lose on average 20 times more of their capital stock each year in disasters. The expected annual losses in SIDS are equivalent to almost 20 per cent of their total social expenditure, compared to only 1.19 per cent in North America and less than 1 per cent in Europe. in the Caribbean basin, expected annual losses are projected to increase by US\$1.4 billion from changes in tropical cyclone winds alone.

Similar level of disproportionate impact is felt by LDCs and LLDCs. Such disproportionality in the face of limited domestic resources and capacity places significant burden on these countries.

Excellencies,

Given that DRR is an integral part of sustainable development, the need for synergy with the ongoing global processes is vital.

Already, issues of DRR are fully integrated into the SAMOA Pathway and Istanbul Programme of Action (IPOA). Further to dedicated sections on DRR in these two internationally agreed documents, matters concerning disaster risks are elaborated in the SAMOA Pathway, for example, under various sectors such as inclusive and economic

growth, climate change, oceans and seas, water sanitation, and forests. This cross sectoral integration is key to building resilience. Ongoing discussions on post-2015 agenda will integrate it in various sections.

It is therefore encouraging that, in regard to the ongoing discussions on the post-2015 development agenda, the international community is looking at DRR and issues surrounding natural hazards, including in proposed goals on ending poverty, ending hunger, human settlements, and climate change.

Since the adoption of the Hyogo Framework of Action, with the help and support of the UN system, international institutions and development partners, many LDCs and SIDS have developed their national disaster councils and entities, that shows their commitment to mainstreaming resilience building into development strategies. Governments, communities, people in the front lines, business, and civil society all have to work together for reducing risks from disasters. But to effectively implement those strategies, they need comprehensive, multi-stakeholder and scaled up support from the international community.

In the context of climate change, all LDCs and many SIDS have also prepared their National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs). Now they are in the process of preparing NAPs. Strong support to execute their plans will be critical to build their adaptation capacities.

And while all countries will continue to require a dedicated, effective and specialized institutional capacity to manage disasters, emergencies and other incidents, it is encouraging to note that recognition is being given to the special difficulties of these vulnerable countries, in the ongoing discussion on the outcome of Sendai, that would be very important for them.

Furthermore, a fair balance in terms of resources for disaster recovery and building resilience should be ensured. We all know that investment in prevention, disaster risk

reduction and building resilience is much less expensive than dealing with disasters afterward as they are good investment.

As such, ongoing discussions should clearly urge the international community to compliment their national efforts by coming out with strong commitment to ensure adequate resources, including financial resources, appropriate technology support, knowledge sharing, and capacity building, including for risk mapping and management, for the most vulnerable countries.

So while progress has been made since the adaptation of Hyogo Framework of Action, there is every incentive for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, with the support of the international community, to strive on and ensure that there is a dividend not only measured in the lives saved when disaster strikes, but also in eradicating poverty and promoting a life of safety and dignity for the most vulnerable in our family of nations.

I thank you for your kind attention.