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United Nations Office of the High Representative
for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small
Island Developing States

Statement

by

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High Representative

for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries
and Small Island Developing States

Plenary

Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction

24 May, 2017

Cancun, Mexico

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by commending the Government and people of Mexico for their warmth, hospitality and outstanding arrangements in hosting the 2017 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. Let me also extend thanks to my colleague, Mr. Robert Glasser, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and his office, UNISDR, for the dedication and leadership on this important issue.

I am heartened to see priority being placed on achieving disaster risk reduction for the most vulnerable countries, including the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

The Global Platform is an important opportunity to reflect on how the most vulnerable members of the international community are progressing in achieving disaster risk reduction.

While significant progress is being made, these groups of countries continue to experience disproportionate disaster losses due to their limited capacity to address risks and respond when disasters strike. As we have witnessed all too often, a single extreme weather event can erase years of development gains in a matter of hours. At the same time, it is also important to recall that while the major events we often hear about in the news are wreaking havoc in these countries, it is the frequently recurring small-scale disasters which impacts communities year in, year out that constitute a higher percentage of disaster losses.

The high economic, social, and environmental costs are leading to complex reconstruction challenges and sluggish growth not only in the short-term but over many years. Losses from disasters are depriving vulnerable countries of scarce resources which could be more usefully spent in areas such as quality education, health and infrastructure; which are vital to

eradicating extreme poverty and ensuring more resilient, productive and peaceful societies.

Furthermore, the challenges these countries face are being magnified by the growing impacts of climate change. We are witnessing the acute impacts of climate change in the most vulnerable countries through: severe droughts, melting glaciers, crop failure, land degradation and rising sea levels. For those that are small islands, future disaster losses are not just disproportionately high; they represent an existential threat.

As we witness rapid advances in science, technology and innovation, vulnerable countries should not remain entrapped in a vicious cycle of poverty and vulnerability. The international community must redouble its efforts to help bring about structural transformation in these countries and enable them to build stronger and more resilient communities.

We have the policies and the tools at hand. From the Sendai Framework to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement, the New Urban Agenda and the respective programmes of

action for vulnerable countries, the blueprint exists to tackle global development challenges.

It is clear that the effective and holistic implementation of the Sendai Framework, in a coherent manner, will set vulnerable country groups on a path of greater resilience. This will also lead to positive results in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals including: tackling poverty, achieving food security, building resilient infrastructure and strengthening adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and disasters.

As we look ahead, we must continue to forge stronger partnerships, including with the private sector, civil society, academia, international financial institutions and others in support of both poverty reduction and disaster risk reduction. And we must redouble our efforts to address the issue of access to finance including the difficulties in accessing concessional loans for those vulnerable countries that are also middle income countries.

In supporting the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, enhanced support is critical to achieve sustainable development in a risk informed manner. This is in

line with the emphasis in the Sendai Framework on prevention and the need to ensure that economic and development planning is risk informed. Greater attention also needs to be paid to women and children, and citizens with special needs who are highly vulnerable especially when disasters strike. Countries are only as strong as their weakest members.

As we look ahead to the 2019 Global Platform, it is my fervent hope that we will continue to make major strides in reducing the risks for vulnerable country groups and ensuring that their challenges remain high on the priorities of the international community.

I thank you.