



## **Remarks**

**By**

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**International Day of Disaster Reduction**

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**Opuwo, Kunene**

**Namibia**

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Hon. Netumbo Nandi- Ndaitwah,  
Governor of the Kunene Region: Hon. Angelika Muharuka,  
Chairperson of the Kunene Regional Council: Hon Julius KK Kaujova,  
Distinguished Senior Government Officials,  
Members of the Media,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning,

On behalf of the UN Family in Namibia, I am pleased to be here with you, in the Kunene region, named after the Kunene river and home to the beautiful Epupa Falls and the world famous Himba, to commemorate the International Day of Disaster Reduction (IDDR). This year's IDDR theme is: "Live to Tell: Raising Awareness, Reducing Mortality".

Allow me to start by thanking the Government of Namibia, especially the Office of the Prime Minister's Directorate for Disaster Risk Management (DDRM), for inviting the UN to be part of this very important commemoration.

Today, I will be reading the message of the United Nations Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-moon, but before I do so, I would like to say a few words on behalf of the United Nations System in Namibia.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Between 2000 and 2013 the world registered 1.3 million deaths and 4.4 billion people were affected in some form or other by a disaster<sup>1</sup>. And globally 60 million people are affected by the current El Nino induced drought<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the 2014 report by the United Nations between 2000 and 2013, 1.3 million people have died from natural disasters while 4.4 billion people have been affected by the long term impacts of disasters.'

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.who.int/hac/crises/el-nino/22january2015/en/>

El Nino is taking place in a world already dramatically affected by climate change, and where more extreme weather events are expected.

Namibia, also, is no stranger to disasters. Namibia is known to be one of the most arid countries in the world with a disaster-prone climate pattern. In Namibia, rainfall often evaporates before it reaches the ground. 97 % of rainfall is lost through some form of evaporation and only 1% of rainfall becomes available to recharge groundwater<sup>3</sup>.

Critical water shortages are impacting harvests and the livestock industry in the agricultural sector, which sustains about 70 percent of the Namibian population<sup>4</sup>.

Currently, Namibia is in its fourth year<sup>5</sup> of drought with approximately 600,000<sup>6</sup> people (approximately a quarter of the population) affected, causing H.E. the President of Namibia, Dr. Hage Geingob, to officially declare a state of emergency in June of this year.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This year's theme for IDDR challenges us to raise awareness about disasters in order to reduce the number of people who lose their lives as a result.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://enviro-awareness.org.na/common-files/files/%5BThink%20Namibia%20Factsheet%203%5D%20Saving%20Water.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bon.com.na/CMSTemplates/Bon/Files/bon.com.na/a2/a2d7d502-f176-432e-9fdd-3de89d3dbb92.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.namibian.com.na/152587/archive-read/President-declares-drought-an-emergency>

<sup>6</sup> [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/sadc\\_namibia\\_2016.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/sadc_namibia_2016.pdf)

When it comes to disasters, Namibia has some good stories to tell. Over the years, Namibia has: developed an impressive Disaster Risk Management legislative and policy framework; put in place a solid DRM institutional structure; and has produced a number of planning instruments to help guide action: for example, the DRM Act (2012) and Regulations (2013), as well as the National Disaster Risk Management Policy of the Republic of Namibia (2009) (currently being revised).

Despite these achievements, the need was recognized to identify gaps in order to strengthen DRM capacity in Namibia. The Deputy Prime Minister therefore requested UN support to facilitate an assessment of Namibia's ability to manage the risk of, and respond to, disasters. Precisely to reduce the impact of disasters on people and ultimately reduce mortality rates.

An international team was therefore deployed, and was led by Representatives of the Office of the Prime Minister (DDRM) and comprised of 12 experts from Disaster Management Institutions of six different countries (including SADC) and five UN Agencies. The team visited 4 Regions, and met 35 institutions at capital, central, regional and constituency levels.

The assessment found that although awareness at the national level was solid, there is an urgent need to increase awareness and build

capacity for resilience (the ability of people to bounce back from a disaster) at regional and the community level.

The assessment also called for implementation of existing policies; public private partnerships i.e. looking at how the private sector can support preparedness, response and recovery, and strengthening coordination and early warning systems based on solid data and analysis.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In September last year, Members of the United Nations adopted 17 Development Goals that constitute the global development agenda for the next 15 years.

The purpose of these goals is to eradicate poverty, save the planet and ensure prosperity for all. Here in Namibia, H.E. the President has declared War on Poverty and elaborated the Harambee Prosperity Plan to guide poverty eradication efforts.

We will not attain our national, continental or global development agendas if we fail to prepare and respond to disasters adequately.

## **So Ladies and Gentlemen,**

And in conclusion, as we pledge to wage war on poverty, not only in Namibia, but across the entire continent; let me assure you, on behalf of the UN system in Namibia, of our commitment to work with Government to Raise Awareness, Save Livelihoods and Reduce Mortality.

--Our commitment to work with Government to ensure that all Namibians can 'live to tell' and stand resilient in the face of disaster; so that nobody is left behind!

**Now allow me to read the MESSAGE of the SECRETARY-GENERAL, Mr. Ban Ki-moon:**

Last year, Governments adopted the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and embedded its objectives in the 2030 Development Agenda. Today, we launch the "Sendai Seven Campaign: Seven Targets, Seven Years", which highlights how we can all contribute to reducing disaster losses. This year's target is reducing loss of life.

We can replace material possessions, but we cannot replace people. I am repeatedly appalled at how many people die in disasters. The majority of victims are invariably the poor and vulnerable.

Today, hundreds of millions of people live at risk from rising seas, earthquakes, drought, heatwaves, floods and storms. They live on marginal lands, beneath unstable hillsides or on storm-exposed coastlines. This is why eradicating extreme poverty -- the first of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, is essential to reducing disaster risk.

The report "Poverty & Death: Disaster Mortality 1996-2015" published today by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), is a damning indictment of inequality. High income countries suffer huge economic losses in disasters, but people in low income countries pay with their lives.

On this International Day for Disaster Reduction, I call on all Governments to work with civil society and the private sector to move from managing disasters to managing risk. Let us move from a culture of reaction to one of prevention and build resilience by reducing loss of life.

**I thank you!**