



**Statement by Republic of Maldives on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States at the Opening of the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction**

**14-18 March 2015 / Sendai – Japan**

Excellencies, Colleagues,

May I begin by extending our congratulations to the Government of Japan, and this beautiful city of Sendai, recognised by the World Disaster Reduction Campaign, as a role model for its efforts on promoting community based disaster risk reduction. I join previous speakers in extending our gratitude for the Government and the people of Sendai and Japan, for your warm welcome and the generous hospitality.

The Maldives has the honour to speak on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), a coalition of 44 low-lying and coastal nations.

*Mr. President,*

2015 is a critical year at the United Nations. This year we will finalize the multilateral frameworks through which disaster risk reduction, sustainable development, financing for development, and climate change action will be addressed in the coming years. Given the close inter linkages between these processes, while keeping in mind the respective and distinct mandates for each process, our efforts in each line of discussion necessarily impacts the others. At the same time, the complexity of the negotiations requires us to do what we can to ensure coherence throughout.

*Mr. President,*

The international community has long recognized the importance of concerted international action to lower the human suffering caused by disasters. Despite these efforts, which include the UN General Assembly's designation of the 1990's as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and the subsequent adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action, global disaster risk may be at an all time high. According to the 2015 Global Assessment Report expected losses from disasters associated with earthquakes, volcanic hazards and risks, tsunamis, tropical cyclone winds, storm surges and flooding are now estimated at 300 billion US dollars annually.

Disasters violently undermine our progress towards sustainable development. They pose a particular threat to small islands developing states. Our small size, geographic isolation, narrow resource base, and exposure to global environmental challenges and external shocks makes it challenging to prepare for disasters before they strike and exceptionally difficult to recover in their aftermath.

SIDS cannot think of disaster risk reduction in isolation from climate change. For us, increasing impacts of human-induced climate change have only added to the challenge of disaster risk reduction. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has warned of increased and more severe extreme weather events, such as heat waves, droughts and floods, as a result of climate change. What's more, sea level rise, more frequent and intense storms, coastal erosion, and saltwater intrusion from human-induced climate change will only compound the challenges we already face from natural disasters.

Scientists are warning us that the policy space available to reduce the impact of disasters is becoming smaller. Impacts from disasters go beyond direct deaths, and have wider and disproportionate implications on the socio-economic order in SIDS. It affects our livelihood and the well being of our peoples and communities. Given our limited resources, we then remain highly concerned of our capacity to cope with and meet the challenges from the projected increase in extreme weather events.

*Mr. President,*

In the SAMOA Pathway, the international community recognised these realities that SIDS face. We also identified the critical need to build resilience, strengthen monitoring and prevention. We noted the need to reduce vulnerability, raise awareness, and increase preparedness in SIDS to respond and recover from disasters.

The post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction then must undoubtedly take into consideration the particular vulnerabilities of SIDS and LDCs. It must be an ambitious renewal of the Hyogo Framework for Action that prioritizes prevention and mitigation. It must also work in synergy with other related processes on sustainable development and climate change. It is indeed necessary to take a holistic approach. And we are glad that the outcome document indeed is action-oriented, and seeks to build on where the HFA1 left off.

Many of us have integrated disaster risk considerations into national development plans and policies. We are already spending significant amounts of public funds on resilience building and climate adaptation. We have the political commitment to institutionalize disaster risk reduction.

But the reality is we can't do this alone and need the financial, technical and capacity building support of the international community to respond to the increased risks we face.

We therefore ask for firm agreement from our partners to fulfill existing commitments, as well as to mobilize the resources required to build the resilience of vulnerable nations. As such, we wish to stress on the need for financial resources for disaster risk reduction and

climate change adaptation initiatives in SIDS. We also call for the strengthening of risk insurance facilities at international level to support SIDS and other particularly vulnerable nation states to manage financial risk from natural disasters.

*Mr. President,*

We look forward to a strong and successful outcome to this Conference. Through better international coordination and cooperation we can make great strides in building resilience and reducing risks associated with disasters. Let's endeavor here to set a high bar for the rest of the year. The road to the "future we want", must begin in Sendai.

Thank you.