

UPDATES AND NEWS

FROM THE NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT CENTRE



Dr Mmaphaka Tau

South Africa continues to be at the cutting edge thought leadership position on disaster risk reduction discourse. This is done through the continuous shaping of the narrative and provision of thought leadership on global disaster risk reduction measures. In the year characterised by concerted efforts towards renewal, hope, economic growth and job creation, South Africa continues to use its intellectual capacity to contribute to inculcating global wisdom on disaster risk reduction discourses in pursuit of realising sustainable

development objectives. This is informed by the country's realisation that our ability to sustain the hard-earned developmental gains and assuring future development services all hinges on the extent to which natural and man-made shocks are prevented or mitigated and how quick and sustainably all role players and stakeholders are able to recover from those shocks.

It against this background that the special representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, Ms Mami Mizutori, stated that, "If it is not risk-informed, it is not sustainable and if it is not sustainable, it has a human cost. Reducing economic losses from disasters has the power to transform lives."

The statement is relevant for South Africa where hazards and disasters, if not managed developmentally, will continue to reverse the development gains made and any future development endeavours. South Africa, however, remains well positioned legally through a robust constitutional jurisprudence that advocates for robust, integrated and sustainable development efforts. The Disaster Management Act 2002 (Act No 57 of 2002) remains as a cutting edge piece of legislation meant to infuse this development enabler.

The year 2019 marks the year of the occasion of the Sixth Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. The Sixth

Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GP2019) took place in Geneva, Switzerland from 13 to 17 May 2019, convened under the theme, "Resilience dividend: towards sustainable and inclusive societies".

This important platform was convened and organised by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) and hosted by the Government of Switzerland. The 2019 meeting of the biennial Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) discussed, among other issues, the 2019 edition of the Global Assessment Report on DRR.

Each of the three official days focused on:

- Taking stock of progress made since the last Global Platform
- Risk-informed public and private investments, including investments in infrastructure and innovative investment modalities
- Action on climate and disaster risk, including integrated national policies, strategies and planning, innovative financial and social instruments and early warning awareness raising, disaster preparedness and community resilience.

The session represented the next important opportunity for the international community to boost the implementation of the Sendai Framework and related Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, as well as commitments of the Paris Climate Agreement. It truly served as the last global gathering for all stakeholders before the deadline for the achievement of Target E of the Sendai Framework, "Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020".

South Africa participated actively through various stakeholders drawn from various spheres of government led by Head of the National Disaster Management Centre, Dr Mmaphaka Tau. These included some universities, The Department of Health, the South African Weather Service, the City of Johannesburg and private individuals active in the field of disaster risk management.

The country' statement was delivered by Dr Mmaphaka Tau supported by the Office of the High Commissioner for South Africa in Geneva as depicted hereunder.



South African national statement to the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, delivered by Dr Mmaphaka Tau, deputy director general (head): National Disaster Management Centre, South Africa, May 2019 Geneva, Switzerland

As with other countries across the globe, South Africa is already experiencing significant effects of climate change, as evidenced through increased temperatures and climate variability. This manifest through a wide range of hazards, including drought, fires, floods, cyclones and severe storms that often trigger widespread hardship and devastation, which threaten livelihoods, increase vulnerability and undermine hard-earned development gains. South Africa has, over the past three years, been battling against the effects of the worst drought recorded since 1926. We are also currently dealing with the consequences of devastating floods that affected three provinces in recent weeks.

To prevent and mitigate the effects of these phenomena, the country is putting measures in place to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and disasters, the current and anticipated impacts of climate change, and the protection of critical ecosystem services and natural resources as well as measures to prevent and mitigate anthropogenic risks. The work of the security cluster also reinforces the disaster risk management efforts through sustained humanitarian support as well as safety and security measures.

In our efforts towards risk informed and risk averse communities, our South African Weather Services (SAWS) continues to issue different weather alerts to the National Disaster Management Centre and the wider South African public, including to the media on a daily basis. The NDMC also has a geographic information system (GIS) web portal platform that is able to ingest the Common Alert Protocol (CAP) for severe weather warnings.

The GIS portal is aimed at furthering the dissemination of the comprehensive risk profiles that we developed. The NDMC and SAWS have also collaborated to implement Impact Based Forecasting, which is a new component of the SA-Multi Hazard Early Warning System (MHEWS) and this is bearing fruit.

The disaster management legislative and policy framework in South Africa aligns well with the objectives of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR). Emerging from an assessment in 2018, there is general compliance with the Act in areas such as institutional capacity, risk assessment, risk reduction, education, training and research with areas for improvement ranging from risk quantification, risk reduction through compliance with bylaws, funding for risk reduction and recording of disaster losses.

Aligned to the Sendai Framework, South Africa has made provision in recent legislative amendments, to expand the existing national institutional structure ie the National Disaster Management Advisory Forum, to serve as the South African National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction thereby emphasising the multi sectoral nature of disaster risk reduction and the responsibility of stakeholders to take collaborative action to reduce risk.

Notwithstanding the substantial gains that have been made in implementing many aspects of the SFDRR, applying the data collection architecture in the SA context to establish and maintain a reliable report on the achievement of the SFDRR targets, is proving more cumbersome and complex than anticipated. We therefore continue to engage stakeholders across multiple sectors towards the enhancement of systems to adequately record and report disaster losses.

Progress in achieving the Target (E):

In South Africa, organs of state are required to develop and implement comprehensive disaster risk management plans, which include performing risk assessments, mapping exposure and vulnerability, providing details of disaster risk reduction and management strategies including particulars of how the needs of vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly and disabled are to be addressed.

The NDMC has reviewed 11 sector plans over the past two years. Several contingency plans have also been developed including the national drought and flood operational plans. Through implementation of these plans, the South Africa National Department of Health for instance, ensured timely response to those needing emergency care for life threatening conditions as well as continued chronic care for victims of the recent flood disasters in the country. In addition, through effective management plans, health access to displaced victims was significantly improved through the national coordination with lead government departments such as the South African National Defence Force and Department of Public Works.

The Government has put measures in place to support communities affected by disasters through disaster relief and recovery grant funding to address immediate needs as well as long-term intervention measures to enable proper planning and 'building-back better'. R3,2 billion has thus far been allocated for drought and flood damages in various provinces. R65 million was also made available to implement DRR measures within the agricultural sector.

South Africa is committed to accelerating the implementation of risk-informed sustainable development through focused and inclusive programmes across the spheres of government to ensure that we "leave no one behind". Accordingly, the Global Platform (GP) will provide impetus to our ongoing national efforts to entrench disaster risk reduction within our national development agenda.

In conclusion, the South African delegation is delighted to be part of the discussions at this global platform and undertakes to continue to contribute to the advancement of the 2019GP theme, "Resilience dividend: towards sustainable and inclusive societies" across the globe.



The Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GP2019) took place in Geneva, Switzerland in May 2019



Dr Mmaphaka Tau delivering his address



South Africa representatives at the 'Words into Action' Guideline launch in Geneva, Switzerland



Dr Mmaphaka Tau addressing members at the 'Words into Action' Guideline launch

The National Disaster Management Centre is currently working on an action driven 'Back to Office Report' that will be presented to the National Disaster Management Advisory Forum (NDMAF), other relevant technical structures as well as the political structures in a quest to ensure the institutionalisation of the outcomes of the Global Platform in the planning, budgeting and implementation of service delivery and disaster risk management discourses in South Africa. The country is proud about the community-based disaster risk reduction work done by the City of Johannesburg in collaboration with OXFAM as showcased during the Global Platform. We are aware that there are various community based initiatives of this nature nationally and we call for heightened efforts to ensure that our communities are better capacitated to deal with hazards and disasters they face in their localities as this goes to the heart of resilience building.

In conclusion, the National Disaster Management Centre will remain resolute and focused on providing thought leadership in pursuit of advancing disaster risk reduction and management discourses in pursuit of its legislative mandate drawn from the Disaster Management Act 2002 (Act 57 of 2002). As head of the NDMC, I will continue to provide strategic leadership and champion critical decisions under the guidance of my immediate leadership supported by our political leadership.

Yours sincerely

Dr Mmaphaka Tau (PhD)
 Deputy Director-General (Head):
 National Disaster Management
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