

Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

Brisbane, Australia, 19-22 September 2022

Country Statement by Government of India

Excellencies, Heads of Delegations and Distinguished delegates,

It is an honour for us to be here as part of the Indian delegation to the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (APMCDRR-2022). On behalf of the Government and people of India, we would like to thank the Government of Australia and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction for organising this Conference. APMCDRR-2022 coincides with the mid-point of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR). It is taking place at a time when the entire world has been affected by COVID-19 pandemic. It is an opportune time to take stock of the progress and chart directions for the future.

We also applaud the Government of Australia and UNDRR for greater focus on the Pacific island nations in this Ministerial conference. The Pacific island nations are already experiencing more frequent and intense disaster events emerging from climate change. They are also taking concrete steps to address their vulnerabilities. Government of India and its partners would like to work closely with them in addressing their disaster risks.

Excellencies, now I would like to provide a brief overview of the steps we are taking in India. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, we have made steady progress towards addressing all the priorities enshrined in the Sendai Framework:

SFDRR Priority 1: Understanding disaster risk

We have substantially scaled up the use of updated disaster risk information in the country. For example, our National Remote Sensing Agency has

developed flood risk maps for all the major flood prone States in the country. Our National Cyclone Risk Mitigation programme has developed web-based composite risk atlas for all the coastal States. We are in the process of upgrading our landslide hazard risk maps to a higher resolution. We have developed a digital vulnerability atlas for the entire country.

SFDRR Priority 2: Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk

We have a legislative and institutional framework for a multi-layered, multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral nationwide system for managing disaster risk. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have innovated in the form of inter-Ministerial Empowered Groups to manage different aspects of the pandemic. This truly represents an all-of-government approach championed by the Sendai Framework.

Our main emphasis now is on putting in place capacities as close to the ground as possible. We recognize the key role of vulnerable communities themselves who are not only the first responders, but often bring to bear local knowledge, initiative and innovation in risk reduction.

SFDRR Priority 3: Investing in disaster reduction for resilience

India's Finance Commission, a statutory body that undertake our public expenditure planning, in its recent report has brought about landmark changes in the way different aspects of disaster risk management are financed in our country. India is one of the few countries in the world that now has a predictable mechanism of financing the entire spectrum of disaster risk management needs – disaster risk mitigation, disaster preparedness, disaster response, recovery and reconstruction, and capacity development at both the national and sub-national levels. We have allocated US\$ 5 billion for disaster risk mitigation alone over five years.

We are also developing targeted programmes to address specific hazard risks. For example, the “**National Programme on Landslide Risk Reduction and Mitigation**” includes: Landslide Risk and Vulnerability Assessment; Community level Awareness Generation & Capacity Building; and Mitigation of Landslides

with local interventions. We are also working towards reducing risk of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) in India. We are also formulating a “**Comprehensive National Earthquake Risk Mitigation Project (CNERMP)**” which will promote earthquake resistant built environment in India.

These budget allocations and programmes are in addition to ensuring that, over time, notions of risk reduction are embedded in every penny we spend on development.

SFDRR Priority 4: Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response

We have made substantial progress in early warning for hydro-meteorological hazards such as cyclones, floods and heat waves etc. The significant reduction in cyclone and heatwave mortality that we have achieved over the past few years is a testimony to the effectiveness of our early warning efforts that are based on community and local empowerment. In a decade we have been able to reduce the loss of lives to less than 2% of what it was in cyclones of similar intensity in earlier decade.

We are working towards further strengthening the last mile dissemination of our early warning systems. Towards this end, we are implementing a project called Common Alerting Protocol which will integrate Alert generating agencies with Disaster Managers and Telecom service providers for dissemination of geo targeted alerts in regional vernacular by SMS in near real-time basis with least human intervention. This will meet the early warning needs of 1.3 billion people of our country and take to scale the notion of greater last mile connectivity for our early warning systems for multiple hazards.

Similarly, implementation of another scheme under which single number ‘112’ for across the nation will facilitate citizens in seeking assistance in Disaster related emergency.

Community level capacity is a cornerstone of disaster preparedness. Towards this end, we are implementing a large-scale community based program called *Aapda Mitra* (Community Volunteers) to strengthen the skill of local community in disaster response and preparedness, subsequently they will act as

first responders during disasters. These volunteers will play a vital role to propagate the message of Disaster Risk Reduction in their respective communities. This scheme targets to train 100,000 such volunteers.

Looking Ahead

While we can celebrate our successes in India and in many other parts of the world, it is clearly not enough. Disaster losses, particularly in economic terms, have continued to rise over the last decade. Our exposure to natural and man made hazards is rising exponentially. Rapid urbanization is not only putting people and infrastructure in the harm's way but also reconfiguring the so called "natural" hazards themselves, for example, by altering the natural drainage patterns. According to an estimate, 75% of the infrastructure that the world cities will have by 2050 is yet to be built. This presents us with an unprecedented opportunity and responsibility. This is our collective responsibility towards future generations.

In India, our ancestors, gave us the notion of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', which means that this whole planet with all its human beings, plants, animals, birds and natural resources is one family. This ancient realisation of our interconnectedness is even more relevant and urgent in our times. As a nation, we are committed to not only enhancing the safety of our own citizens but also work with other countries to build our collective resilience.

Our initiative to establish a global Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) is an expression of our commitment to work collectively with the international community to reduce disaster risks. The Coalition, with 38 members, has received wide and enthusiastic support from across the world. At the COP26 earlier this year, the CDRI launched its global initiative on Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS) to work with the Small Island Developing Nations. This will also support space technology applications for disaster risk assessments, early warning as well as disaster response.

We are also working towards integration of latest technology platforms such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, big data, drones etc. for increasing efficiency and effectiveness of our disaster risk management systems at all levels.

We pledge to redouble our efforts to meet the goals and targets of the Sendai Framework. We commit ourselves to work with countries in the region and beyond in building resilient nations and communities.

Before I conclude, I once again thank the Government of Australia and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction for organizing this event and making our stay very comfortable.

Thank you.
