



**United Nations Country Team (UNCT)
Ethiopia**

Commemoration of the International Day of Disaster Risk Reduction

Welcome Remarks

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Check against delivery

Your Excellency, State Minister Mitiku Kassa, Ministry of Agriculture,

**H.E. Ms. Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, Commissioner for Rural Economy and
Agriculture, African Union Commission,**

Ato Muluneh Woldemariam, Director, Early Warning and Response, DRMFS

Senior Government officials,

Members of Civil Society,

Development partners,

Colleagues from the UN Agencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to join you all today as Ethiopia commemorates the **International Day of Disaster Risk Reduction** under the global theme of **Knowledge for Life**.

This year's theme helps us to acknowledge and celebrate the importance that disaster affected communities' traditional knowledge, practices and existing coping mechanisms have on ensuring better planning and understanding of disaster risk.

Today we have an excellent opportunity to come together to reflect, share knowledge, learn from each other, and craft new innovative solutions for Disaster Risk Management in Ethiopia that will bring on board everyone - the women, youth, the elderly, children, persons with disabilities, poor people, migrants, indigenous peoples, as well as volunteers and community of practitioners.

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Distinguished Participants,

As we reflect and share knowledge, let us do so with a clear recognition that our interventions must be inclusive and focused on building resilience to shocks as the cornerstone for ensuring sustainable development.

Resilience-building approaches recognise that communities have expert knowledge of their local environment. We all know that communities are the first respondents on the ground to any disasters affecting the

most vulnerable sections of the society. And that is why it is communities that are best positioned to detect, experiment and innovate so that they respond to the risks and recover quicker from economic, social and environmental shocks and stresses.

In March this year member states met in Sendai, Japan to adopt the Sendai Framework, helping revamp the previous Hyogo Framework for Action. The Sendai Framework clearly contains multiple direct references to the need for a strong focus on communities and indigenous peoples.

There is always room for governments to strengthen further and scale up their engagement with a wide range of relevant stakeholders in the design and implementation of policies, plans and standards.

There is no doubt that traditional, indigenous and local knowledge and practices – gathered not only from a lifetime but generations of lifetimes of experience - can complement scientific knowledge in disaster risk assessment and help develop and implement policies, strategies, plans and programmes of specific sectors – and tailor it appropriately to local context.

This will not only benefit the communities themselves but also provide opportunities for wider replication of initiatives. Moreover, this will help ensure that Ethiopia continues to share its lessons and knowledge with the world while learning from good practices from around the globe.

Of course, we all need to recognize the key role that governments play in leading, coordinating and providing regulation in DRM. The Ethiopian government is a good example of this.

On the ground, local authorities also play a unique role of acting as a bridge that links the national to the local context and effectively draws in communities. That is why we need to discuss and explore ways of helping further empower local authorities, through regulatory and financial means, so that they can scale up their work and coordinate more with civil society, communities and indigenous peoples and migrants in disaster risk management at the local level.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year's theme of *Knowledge for Life* takes on an even greater significance as we move on towards a post-2015 development agenda.

A few weeks ago Ethiopia joined other UN member states for the annual UN General Assembly to discuss and agree upon a new development models for the future – the Sustainable Development Goals- or SDGs. This new post 2015 vision, encompassed within 17 SDGs, will build on the gains that we have partnered to make over the past 15 years to meet

the Millennium Development Goals so that we achieve sustainable development for the planet and the people.

Resilience building in Ethiopia is a long-term comprehensive and multifaceted commitment, and the SDGs could be a great resource for our DRM interventions to help us develop models that are inclusive and attuned to realizing the **future we want**.

Let me take this opportunity to reiterate that the United Nations in Ethiopia is committed to continue to support the country's efforts to ensure effective DRM policy-making, programming and planning from federal to community level.

We also strongly believe that strategically investing in strengthening institutional capacity can lead to cost-effective, systematic and sustainable actions that will in turn improve food security, protect lives

and livelihoods, and boost resilience at all levels so that we see a reduction in disaster risks and minimize impacts of disasters.

As Ethiopia introduces its second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), the UN is also getting ready to launch its new four year development assistance framework – UNDAF- and DRM interventions will continue to be one of the key outcomes areas for the UN’s work in Ethiopia in the coming years.

That is why on behalf of the UN Country Team I call on all those who work in DRM in Ethiopia to be bold and innovative as you showcase what works and what doesn’t work, highlight challenges, and carefully evaluate the impacts of medium and long term resilience building interventions.

I wish you all a fruitful discussion and exciting exchange of ideas and knowledge. I thank you for your attention.