

**TALKING POINTS**

**HON. AMOS M. KIMUNYA, M.P.,  
MINISTER FOR LANDS AND HOUSING**

**DURING THE INTERACTIVE SESSION**

**ON**

**HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE**

**13<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE  
COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**FOCUSING**

**ON THE**

**“IMPACT OF NATURAL DISASTERS ON WATER,  
SANITATION AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS – PREVENTION  
AND RESPONSE”**

**20<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2005 - NEW YORK (5:00 P.M.)**

**Mr. Chairman,**

Recent statistics indicate that developing countries in general, and Africa in particular, experience disasters with increasing frequency and complexity. These have caused extensive human suffering, loss of life and livelihoods in the continent. Many African States have experienced, among others, hydro meteorological (drought, floods, lightening) and geological (earthquakes and volcanic eruptions), disasters. Others have been dodged with insecurity resulting to a huge population of internally displaced persons and refugees, most of whom are women and children. African countries are also facing a systematic environmental degradation that is raising their vulnerability and lowering the natural resilience to disaster impacts, delaying recovery and reconstruction time and generally weakening the resource base on which all human activity in the continent is ultimately dependent.

An estimated 80% of the population in the poorest African states lives below the poverty line. Poverty contributes to rural urban migration that fuels mushrooming of slums in major cities and towns. The people living in the slums have insecure shelter, lack access to adequate and safe water and sanitation and other basic social services. The low Gross Domestic Product of African states coupled with the high debt burden leaves many of the states without resources for investment in development and disaster risk reduction programmes.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The most frequent natural disasters in Kenya have resulted from droughts, floods, landslides, lightening and fires. Human-induced disasters including internal and regional conflicts within and across the national boundaries have also had a toll on the national coping capacity.

My delegation recognizes that reducing peoples' vulnerability to disaster risks requires building their resilience and coping mechanisms to current and future disasters through development planning and

budgeting programmes, building of partnerships at all levels, peaceful resolution of conflicts and tackling refugees and internally displaced persons in a holistic and integrated manner. We further recognize that proactive disaster risk reduction strategies can minimize injury, human suffering, loss of life and livelihoods, damage of infrastructure and ecosystems. When strategies are well coordinated, mitigation plan is applied in a timely manner reducing relief and restoration costs. For example, the Government of Kenya and the international community spent over US\$300 million during the 1999/2001 drought in Kenya whereas the combined cost for mitigation strategies could have been half of the amount. This illustrates a high imbalance between accessing resources for disaster risk reduction activities and the emergency response operations from national budgets and external sources thereby hindering implementation of proactive strategies and mechanisms to minimize adverse impacts of disasters.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Kenya has formulated a draft National Disaster Management Policy whose thrust is to mainstream disaster risk management into poverty reduction and sustainable development initiatives. This is congruent with the principles and guidelines of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safe World (1994), the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (September 2002), the Kobe-Hyogo Framework of Action 2005-2015 on Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters (January 2005) and the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (2000).

Priority areas that require immediate action for most of our countries include: establishing a focal point for addressing disaster risk reduction; establishment of a Disaster Trust Fund, increasing awareness of risk preparedness, promotion of public leadership and commitment to disaster reduction; building multidisciplinary and intersectoral partnerships and networks in disaster risk initiatives; improving scientific knowledge on causes of natural disasters and their resultant effects; and, strengthening of regional and international partnerships in disaster risk reduction.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Finally, my delegation recognizes that it is the primary responsibility of Governments to implement disaster risk reduction strategies and programmes. We however, note that challenges to disaster risk reduction in many developing countries include governance systems, risk identification and assessment capacities, knowledge management and limited linkages between relief and reconstruction programmes with long term sustainable development. We therefore, urge the international community and the UN system to honour their commitments towards assisting developing countries to strengthen their governance institutions; risk identification and assessment capacities, bridge knowledge management and best practices gaps, and exiting from the emergency relief response cycle to sustainable development initiatives in disaster risk reduction.

**Thank you**