The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management

COUNTRY DECLARATION

IV Session of Regional Platform for DRR in the Americas

The Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPM) was established in 2005 to replace the former National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) as a Division of the Ministry of National Security with responsibility for not only disaster response but also Risk Management at the national level.

> *In placing this definition in the context of the guidelines for country declarations as set out by the UNISDR, the paper will focus on the main tendencies, achievements, challenges and ways forward surrounding Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) as an integral part of development processes, as well as on aspects surrounding a post-2015 framework for DRR (2015-2025) in Trinidad and Tobago.*

Major Achievements and Initiatives in DRR

The ODPM has identified three (3) pillars in its five (5) year strategic plan namely, *Legislative Authority, 100% Readiness and 100% Risk Reduction*. Using a series of cascading dashboards (highlighting red, yellow and green to illustrate stagnant, poor or satisfactory achievement respectively) the key indicators espoused in UNISDR's Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005 – 2015 have been used as the measuring tool to determine levels of success of our current projects **(See Current State – Summary of Progress statement attached).**The five (5) *priority areas for action* are as follows:-

- Priority Action1: Make disaster risk reduction a national and a local priority;
- Priority Action 2: Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning;
- Priority Action 3: Build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels;
- Priority Action 4: Reduce the underlying risk factors; and
- Priority Action 5: Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.

Action 1

In an attempt to mainstream DRR and make it a national and local priority, the ODPM has strategically established a *National Disaster Risk Reduction Committee (NDRRC).* This approach mainly involves collaboration with inter-disciplinary agencies and ministries; and multi-level disaster management institutions to mainstream DRR into the various sectors nationwide.

Action 2

The principles of Priority for Action 2 were initiated in the *San Juan River Basin Early Flood Warning Project* implemented in 2011. This undertaking involved partnership with the Water Resources Agency (WRA) to test and evaluate mechanisms for Flood Warning Systems. The project's success provided a strong basis for further development, and in 2013 the ODPM partnered with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of Local Government (MOLG) to enhance Community Based Early Warning and GIS technical Capacity. The project was centred on training workshops, and the development of supporting toolkits as well as the establishment of a Risk Reduction Management Centre (RRMC) and Early Warning Points in the Mayaro Rio Claro Regional Corporation. This project was initially conceived as a pilot exercise, and as a result of its success, the ODPM together with its partner agencies are currently investigating the feasibility for replication in other vulnerable areas.

Recognising the need for a greater understanding of the elements of risk in Trinidad and Tobago the ODPM conducted a National Preliminary Vulnerability Assessment (PVA), which promoted synergy between other initiatives such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) funded project entitled *'Improving Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management in Trinidad and Tobago'.* The main project deliverables included the creation of a Country Risk Profile for Trinidad and Tobago as well as a National Institutional Capacity Assessment. The results of the study proved to be quite insightful revealing that at a national level, the average annual losses (AAL) is higher at USD$70.73 Million for earthquakes, but for larger return periods strong winds contribute to the most risk. With the completion of both projects during the first quarter of 2014, the ODPM has already mapped its way forward, and currently plans utilise these resources in the development of a Historical Natural Hazard Atlas, expected to be completed in 2015. Another emerging outcome was the collaboration between the ODPM and the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development (MPSD) towards the standardization and sharing of hazard and risk data in a single repository.

Action 3

The ODPM believes that the tools used to create a culture of safety and resilience should be versatile and evolving to keep up with current trends, in order to reach citizens on a platform with which they are familiar, and can easily access. In addition to traditional media such as television, radio and newspaper print, the ODPM has fully embraced the use of social media, such as Twitter and Facebook , as well as web based knowledge sharing platforms such as You Tube , so much so that it has been integrated into the organization's daily operations . These applications are put to use in the education, sensitization and enhancement of public awareness, and have in emergency situations proven to be effective tools for the dissemination of emergency messages.

 The ODPM has also adopted a community based approach to achieving Priority Action 3, though the launch of the Communities Organised and Ready for Emergencies (C.O.R.E) Programme. With the slogan *"LET'S GET READY"* it is an outreach programme currently being used as a push factor to engage and sensitize the general public on disaster preparedness. To date, there have been three phases- *Phase 1 Flood Smart*, *Phase 2 – Better and Safer building in Construction (BASIC)* and *Phase 3-Emergency Planning*. CORE involves community transect walks, questionnaire surveys, television and radio advertisements and internet-based competitions. The programmes most recent success to date is the introduction of a weekly television show, aimed at educating citizens about hazards , mitigation and preparedness in a local context though the subtle use of local examples , expressions and cultural norms.

Additional efforts to create a culture of safety and resilience involves programmes specially targeted toward youth. A National Primary Schools Quiz has been held for the past three years and in 2014, a revamp has been undertaken to increase its scope and scale. A children's activity book has also been developed and will be launched alongside a web game and mobile application that will teach younger generations about the components of being a prepared and resilient individual.

Action 4

Priority action 4 mandates that actions must be taken to reduce underlying risk factors. In this arena , the country has also greatly benefited from strategic partnerships , as the UNDP has also provided funding and support through their continued partnership with the ODPM .This is evidenced by their efforts to improve Disaster Risk Management Policies and Strategies for at least 4 sectors ; develop a well-functioning Emergency Communications System; and map ,rank and assess the Critical Infrastructure of Trinidad and Tobago.

Another major accomplishment to date has been the Cabinet appointment of ODPM to sit on the National Building Code Committee (multi-stakeholder committee) for the

development of a building code by the end of 2013. This initiative, among others in which ODPM is also a critical player, is being pioneered by the Ministry of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs.To further add, the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA), in conjunction with the ODPM and other agencies is seamlessly working to institute the element of *Business Continuity Management* in all Ministries nationwide.

Action 5

As a realization of Priority Action 5, the proposal to conduct a National Exercise Drill of a simulated, level three (3) catastrophic event continues in March every year and this explicitly depicts the Organizations' aim to strengthen preparedness and response efforts. This year's simulation aptly titled "Exercise Dark Wave" simulated the occurrence of a high magnitude earthquake, and the resulting Tsunami. What was significant of this exercise was that the time of impact was set late at night , outside of conventional working hours , allowing for callout and mobilization procedures to be tested and evaluated, with both emergency support functions , volunteers and private sector partners.

From a more strategic perspective, policy development for water resource management, food, shelters, post disaster debris management and logistics management solidifies the organization's implementation motive. The ODPM has also pooled resources with IDB and the Ministry of Local Government through Regional Corporations to train and establish Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) in various communities such as Cedros, Toco and Blanchisseuse. Assessments and exercises between the Disaster Management Units of the Regional Corporations have also been conducted through the 'Readiness Project' initiative.

In addition, the implementation of the National Operations Centre (NOC), a 24-hour situational awareness centre, with ICT and Call Centres such as, 999 – Police Services, 990 – Fire Services, 811 – Ambulance/Medical Response, 511 – ODPM Emergency Customer Care Centre and 211 – TEMA Emergency Call Centre, will soon be transformed into an integrated 911 system.

<u>Major Obstacles for Moving Ahead with a Holistic Vision of DRR as an Integral Component of Development Processes</u>

Over the past decade, commendable strides have been made on a national level to mainstream DRR into the Development Planning Process. However, major challenges still exist. General issues have emerged due to poor institutional arrangements, out-dated legislation, non-existent building code standards, the lagging implementation of the National Spatial Development Strategy. To add to these issues,

disaster risk managers are hindered by limited data availability, financial constraints and knowledge transfer issues, while being tasked to bolster the preparedness of a population who hold skewed perceptions of risk. These obstacles to the development process are all factors that have contributed to the physical and environmental vulnerability of the country as a whole.

ODPM's Vision with Respect to a Post-HFA 2015 Instrument

Ideally, the ODPM envisions itself as the conduit for practical connections between Disaster Risk Management and climate change adaptation which can result in sustainable development. In fact, the institution will continue to mainstream DRR sector-wide while reinforcing the need to *rehabilitate* rather than simply *recover* from disasters with special emphasis on incorporating mitigative mechanisms towards building national and community resilience.This approach espouses the recommendations put forward by the HFA 2005-2015 as we aim to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management

CURRENT STATE - SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

KEY INDICATOR	PROGRESS/STATUS	
	2011-2013	2013-2015
PRIORITY 1 - Ensure that disaster risk is a national and local priority wiht a strong institutional basis for implementation		
1 National policy and legal framework for disaster risk reduction exists with decentralized responsibilities and capacities at all levels	4	4
2 Dedicated and adequate resources are available to implement disaster risk reduction plans and activities at all administrative levels	2	2
3 Community participation and decentralization are ensured through the delegation of authority and resources to local levels	4	4
4 A national mult-sectoral platform for disaster risk reduction is functioning	3	3
PRIORITY 2 - Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning		
1 National and local risk assessments based on hazard data and vulnerability information are available and include risk assessments for key sectors	2	3
2 Systems are in place to monitor, archive and disseminate data on key hazards and vulnerabilities	4	4
3 Early Warning Systems are in place for all major hazards, with outreach to communities	3	3
4 National and local risk assessments take account of regional/trans-boundary risk, with a view to regional cooperation on risk reduction	4	4
PRIORITY 3 - Use Knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels		
1 Relevant information on disasters is available and accessible at all levels, to all stakeholders	3	4
2 School curricula, education material and relevant trainings include disaster risk reduction and recovery concepts and practices	2	3
3 Research methods and tools for multi-risk assessments and cost benefit analysis are developed and strengthened	2	3
4 Countrywide public awareness strategy exists to stimulate a culture of disaster resilience, with outreach to urban and rural communities	4	4
PRIORITY 4 - Reduce the underlying risk factors		
1 Disaster risk reduction is an integral objective of environment related policies and plans, including for land use, natural resouce management and adaptation to climate change	4	4
2 Social development policies and plans are being implemented to reduce the vulnerability of populations most at risk	3	3
3 Economic and productive sectoral policies and plans have been implemented to reduce the vulnerability of populations most at risk	3	3
4 Planning and development of human settlements incorporate disaster risk reduction elements, including enforcement of building codes	3	3
5 Disaster risk reduction measures are integrated into post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation processes	3	3
6 Procedures are in place to assess the disaster risk impacts of major development projectws, especially infrastructure	3	3
PRIORITY 5 - Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels		
1 Strong policy, technical and institutional capacities and maehcanisms for disaster risk management, with a disaster risk reduction perspective are in place	2	4
2 Disaster preparedness and contingency plans are in place at all administrative levels, and regular training drills and rehearsals are held to test and develop disaster response programmes	4	4
3 Financial reserves and contingency mechanisms are in place to support effective response and recovery when required	4	4
4 Procedures are in place to exchange relevant information during hazards events and disasters, and to undertake post-event reviews	4	4