



International Day for Disaster Reduction

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Message from His Excellency the Minister for Home and Cultural Affairs



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The International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR) is celebrated on the 13th of October every year, all over the world. It began in 1989 after a call by the United Nations General Assembly to promote a global culture of risk-awareness and disaster reduction. Bhutan joined the rest of the world in observing this day since 2008. It is a day to encourage every citizen and the government to take part in building more disaster resilient communities and nations.

The theme for IDDR 2016 is **“Living with Disaster Risks - Building Partnership for Resilient Communities”** intending to draw attention to the importance of inclusiveness in building safer and resilient communities. This theme is taken from the global framework - the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

On this day, let us remind ourselves that we live in one of the

most disaster prone regions in the world. This reminder comes at an opportune time when the world is experiencing so many disasters. As we are all aware, Bhutan is also vulnerable to various kinds of hazards - hydro meteorological, geological and biological hazards which are further exacerbated by climate change. We have experienced our own share of disasters such as the 2009 Cyclone Aila precipitated floods, 2009 and 2011 earthquakes, fires in Wamrong, Chamkhar and Mongar towns, the Wangduephodrang Dzong fire in 2012, the windstorm events of past years, the floods in Sarpang and Phuntsholing this year causing immense loss and damages. These are grim reminders of our country’s vulnerability to disasters.

However, I am happy to share that we have come a long way in terms of disaster risk management in the country. The government endorsed the National Disaster Risk Management Framework (NDRMF) in 2006 as the first policy framework to specifically address the vulnerability and risk profile of the country. In 2013, the Disaster Management Act was enacted by the Parliament to establish and strengthen institutional capacity for disaster management; mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction and to provide for an integrated and coordinated disaster management targeting

community participation.

In terms of the institutional framework, the Department of Disaster Management (DDM) under the Ministry of Home & Cultural Affairs serves as the national coordinating agency and the secretariat to the National Disaster Management Authority, the highest decision making body on disaster management chaired by the Hon’ble Prime Minister, supported by the various ministries, agencies and local level disaster management committees.

The Act also details disaster risk management as pertaining to all phases of disaster and its management i.e. risk prevention, risk reduction, risk mitigation, preparedness, response, rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction and therefore underlines the need to mainstream it into development planning and programs.

This leads to the understanding of disaster risk management as an inseparable part of governance and sustainable development. We cannot talk of sustainable development without taking into consideration disaster risk reduction.

This essentially means that disaster risk management is a collective responsibility of everyone. Each one of us must work together as individuals, as sectors, as private agencies and the government as a whole to

reduce risks. Many efforts have been initiated by the Ministries and the line agencies with the support of our development partners to address the issue of building resilience among the communities.

We look forward to the same spirit and continued support in the times to come to reduce disaster risks in the Country.

While we have made significant achievements in terms of reducing the risks, we must remember that there is still much that needs to be done. Awareness and education needs to be carried out across the country, disaster management and contingency Plans have to be prepared, institutions, standards and protocols need to be developed and put in place to ensure better preparedness and resilience.

As we observe the 2016 International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction, I take this opportunity to thank all our partners and to urge the Government, civil society, international organizations, private sector, volunteer groups and individuals to join hands and work towards the common goal in building more disaster resilient community.

Disaster risk reduction is everybody’s business. On this International Day, let us revamp our commitment towards building a Safer and Happy Bhutan.

