

MINISTER'S SPEECH TO COMMOMERATE THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DISASTER RISK REDUCTION HELD ON OCTOBER 13, 2017, KYEGEGWA DISTRICT

Honorable Members of Parliament,

District Chairperson,

RDC, DISO, CAO,

OPM staff

Heads of district departments and security agencies

All civil servants,

District Councilors, LC3 Chairpersons,

All invited guests, children, ladies and gentlemen.

- Good afternoon!

On behalf of the Government of Uganda through the Office of the Prime Minister, the Department of Disaster Preparedness and Management and all humanitarian actors and stakeholders, I wish to take this opportunity to welcome you, to this historical day, which, is significant in creating awareness about natural and human-induced disasters and their devastating effects to the world population but more specifically, to the people of this country.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished invited guests, before I proceed, permit me provide to you a brief overview of the extent in terms of effects and impact of natural and human-induced disasters to the population, both at international and local levels which, are the basis and justification for the annual observation of this day.

The United Nations Special Initiative for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNSIDR) revealed that, in the year 2016 alone, 24.2 million people all over the world, left their homes because of natural and human-induced disasters. UNSIDR further states that, over the last twenty years, more than 1,350,000 million people have died as a result of their vulnerability and exposure to natural hazards with women, children, the elderly and the physically impaired

people bearing a heavy toll. Internationally, it is estimated that, in the last two decades alone, over 4 billion persons have been displaced and left homeless, injured or in need of emergency assistance.

Whenever these disasters occur, they result in loss of life, which is extremely tragic. Quite often, they destroy livelihood, infrastructure, critical systems and the environment which are usually, extremely costly. Globally, disasters lead to an estimated annual economic loss of USD\$ 250 to 300 billion. In future, these figures are likely to increase, with the rising pressures of climate change, over-population and urbanization, especially in Africa,

At a national level, the International Climate Risk Report (CIGI, 2007) identified Uganda as one of the least prepared and most vulnerable countries in the world. Uganda therefore, takes disaster risk reduction as central to its transformational process and further, recognises that, its transformation to a middle income country by 2010, in the face of DRR and climate change, is of primary concern because, they affect all the sectors of the economy and are some of the greatest risks to the realisation of NDP II.

In terms of economic losses, trends and their related costs, Uganda experienced 2,500 disasters in the last decade. For instance, between 2010-2011, rainfall variability costed the country \$1.2 billion. According to the National Development Plan, all the sectors of the economy were invariably affected and the economic, social and environmental costs also differed.

The country continues to be adversely affected by drought, floods, slope failures (landslides), earthquakes, lightening, hailstorms, strong winds, extreme precipitation (El nino), extended dry spell (lanina), wild, domestic, institutional and industrial fires, oil spillage, famine, insurgencies/internal conflicts, epidemics, just to mention but a few.

Since 2007 to date, the above natural and human-induced disasters, have affected over 3.6 million people, equivalent to the combined total population of Kampala and Wakiso districts.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is critically important to note that, the economic loss from climate change and related disasters is not only direct on

agriculture but also affect infrastructure, transport, housing and settlement and has many other indirect consequences.

For example, it disrupts transactions along agricultural and tourism value chains and industrial production, loss of revenue, market destabilisation, disruption of learning among school-going children and inflation. Food shortage is usually accompanied by high food prices which deprive the poor, children and elderly of food and nutrition security and consequently malnutrition, to mention but a few.

In 2007-2008 fiscal year, disasters and climate change damages were equivalent to 4.4 % of the annual budget. The cost of the damage exceeded the 3.3% budget allocation for the entire Environment and Natural Resources Sector¹.

Ladies and gentlemen, allow me turn to this year's IDDR theme, which talks of "**Home Safe Home Reducing Exposure, Reducing Displacement**". I wish to reiterate that, the NRM Government, stands and shall continue to stand in solidarity with all persons affected by disasters in this country and this is manifested and translated into existing public policies, strategic annual workplans and resource allocations, to take forward implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction Agenda.

We shall continue to act across the board to advocate for risk awareness, prevention and preparedness through means such as education, culture and communication to reduce exposure and displacements through capacity building, knowledge sharing and networking, early warning and policy advice.

Let us embrace the "**Home Safe Home**" slogan for this year's International Day for Disaster Reduction, as an opportunity to mobilize the population and to strengthen collaboration with all stakeholders so as, to reduce disasters associated with rapid urbanization, poverty, environmental deterioration and climate change, but most important of all, we need to avoid the creation of risks in the first place.

To all disaster victims who have been displaced and re-integrated into various communities by government in the country, I implore you to make use of the land which, has been allocated to you to, to improve on your

household food and nutrition security and at the same time, use it as a source of livelihood.

May I also take this opportunity, to inform you that, OPM, through the Department of Disaster Preparedness and Management, has developed a tool, to track all beneficiaries of the current on-going Land Resettlement Programme, in order to assess and determine the availability and usability of these land parcels, to returnees. Partly, this is intended to evaluate the performance of the programme for future planning. Those found to have misused the land parcel allocated to them by Government, will be dealt with according to the long hand of the law.

To the sub-national and local authorities where these resettlement programmes are located, we encourage you to start planning for establishment and provision of basic services such as primary and secondary schools, health units, sources of safe and clean drinking water, feeder roads, security, market places, just to mention but a few. The NRM Government is planning to supplement your efforts to have some of these services established. But Local authorities, should take lead.

Ladies and gentlemen, in future, I wish to encourage pupils and students from primary and secondary schools as well as institutions of high learning, to actively participate in various activities of this day to popularize and spread the knowledge regarding these disasters so as, to prepare everyone particularly our youngsters, for all types of eventualities. Active involvement and participation in awareness creation, sensitization and education of the masses through music, dance and drama and school clubs and associations will go along way to awaken the public about DRR in communities.

To the different media houses and all public communicators present, take DRR awareness, sensitization and popularization as one of your key priority programmes to share with the public. You are a strong partner and stakeholder in this crusade of disaster prevention, preparedness, mitigation and response. With your involvement, disaster effects will be reduced on the population.

Relatedly, I call upon the media to organize a number of volunteer programs. The youth should use social media such as facebook, twitter, whatsapp and other social applications on this day to spread the theme of International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction. Let them share events in

various states, famous environmental quotes and facts, add photos based on the theme of this particular year.

To civil society organizations, faith based entities, local and international financial institutions and the private sector, you are urged to step up implementation of the Hyogo Framework. Disaster risk reduction is everybody's business. Only by investing in tangible risk reduction measures can we reduce vulnerability and protect development.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to remind you that, disaster risk reduction is about stronger and sound land use planning, better early warning systems, environmental management and evacuation plans and, above all, education. It is about making communities and individuals aware of their risk to natural hazards and how they can reduce their vulnerability. No community is immune from the threat of natural disasters, but mountain communities are particularly vulnerable. Poor land-use planning, environmental mismanagement, lack of regulatory mechanisms and other human activities increase the risk that a disaster will occur, and worsen their effects when they do.

Thank you for listening.

I wish you a merry Christmas and happy year.

GOD BLESS YOU