

As Chairman of this Conference, I have had the opportunity to observe, upfront, your deliberations. Your commitment to this cause is certainly not in question. Notwithstanding of place, culture and representation it is clear that you are wedded to the common cause of promoting safe and resilient societies. Unquestionably, the opportunity that I have had as Chairman to share and learn from you, the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) practitioners, will have far reaching impact on how I view this portfolio that I manage.

As Cabinet Minister with portfolio responsibility for Emergency and Disaster Management, I am pleased with the strides that Jamaica as an island and the Region as a whole have taken to advance the Disaster Risk Management and embrace Comprehensive Disaster Management. From a personal perspective, this position has broadened my knowledge and significantly impacted my appreciation and understanding for the concept of Disaster Risk Reduction, and associated policy issues. This association has served to increase my knowledge base thus resulting in increased capacity for addressing issues pertinent to the Jamaica Disaster Risk Reduction platform and also my Regional stewardship of the CDM

Success stories are worth replicating as much they are worth sharing. The lessons learnt and the world of possibilities that this Conference has created, position island nations and low lying developing states to champion their own cause in promoting DRR. I wish to assure this conference of my unwavering commitment that the messages emanating from here will be transmitted to my colleagues who shape Jamaica's Development agenda and those in the CDEMA Council.

I feel that we are leaving here with a revived acknowledgement of our shared and collective responsibility. As policy makers and agents of the change process, we are committed to the charge of ensuring individual and collective ownership and engagement of our political leaders to the Disaster Resilience agenda. We must remain committed to providing support for, and promoting the efforts toward strengthening governance process of the CDM at the local levels.

The messages that have resonated from the presenters across the various sessions bring to the fore the fact that there is more to our commonalities than merely being Small Island Developing States (SIDS). We have shared exposure to a multiplicity of risk factors; as well as an urgent need for strategies to bolster human and response capacities. We must be resolute in our quest for disaster resilience. Likewise, the commitment to be more assertive and action oriented is paramount. We are a people prone to a multiplicity of natural and man-caused hazards for which an action plan has to be formulated

The successes of this week must transcend local borders. We must remain committed to the cause of facilitating the DRR process at home and abroad. As the conference theme encourages us, Building Disaster Resilience is a Shared Responsibility. CDEMA cannot undertake the task single handedly, and neither can the ODPEM or for that matter, individual NDOs operating in isolation. It requires collaboration, synergies and the will to see our region becoming a disaster resilient one.

The messages that have been reverberated across walls between sessions are clear:

- There must be feverish efforts toward private sector engagement for the promotion of CDM programme and the mission of resilience
- Collectively we must explore opportunities to improve and simplify how progress is measured and communicated
- The time is right to accelerate development and adaptation of standards to underpin resilience goals
- Devise strategies to address the human resource deficits through strategic human resource development programmes
- Promote greater and more efficient utilization of Information & Communication Technologies in all spheres of the DRR agenda
- Review and revise the country framework on DRR and CCCA towards integrated agenda for resilience
- Take the bold step to address communication of risk and risk information

With each staging of the annual Conference, Comprehensive Disaster Management continue to garner greater levels of involvement and buy-in, evolving with each successive year. The innovators behind this phenomenal idea must be lauded for the vision, drive and selfless commitment to a worthy cause, that, the region and by extension the world is better for it. While it cannot be overemphasized how important the human factor is to the process, the financial backing that the programme has received this and previous years from our generous sponsors is testimony to the important role that DRR plays for Public and Private Sector partners as well as NGOs and Donor Communities.

Delegates, we are mindful that the CARICOM Deputy Secretary General and the Caribbean Development Bank's Vice President with responsibility for Operations considered it appropriate and sufficiently important to share with us in this conference. This in itself is indicative of the position that has been taken to promote this worthwhile agenda. There is a common saying here in Jamaica "to put your money where your mouth is". This we see on demonstration as not

only have they invested financially, but of their time and talent, all necessary ingredients to drive the process.

We have entered an era in which DRM and Development must be seen and approached as twin pillars that should hold a position of prominence on the National Development agenda, here in Jamaica and across the region as a whole.

As the curtains come down, let us make the commitment to doing our part to advance the cause of DRR. We are reminded that we live in a highly connected and globalized community; We must engage in a meaningful way, international discourse on Risk Management, development and resilience and the impact that this could have on our Regional goals.

In closing, as a first step in the right direction, let us seek to define our local and regional perspective by infusing and creating harmony between the CDM and Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) processes. Once again, I thank you for attending the 7th Conference on CDM and by extension for making it Jamaica.