SWITZERLAND’S OFFICIAL STATEMENT
FOR THE 7TH SESSION OF THE GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (GP2022)

Pre-recorded video statement read by
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Distinguished Heads of State and Government,
Ministers, Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Switzerland is convinced that sustainable development and human well-being are only possible if they are not shattered by hazards, whether they are of natural, technical, or societal origin.

As a mountainous country, Switzerland has a long history of dealing with hazards. People in the Alps have always lived with the forces of nature, and learnt to deal with them. In the past decades, the impact of climate changes has become very tangible, adding new challenges. In the 1990s up to the mid-2000s Switzerland was struck by a number of devastating storms, floods and debris flows, causing damage to lives, property, and infrastructure.

The increasing frequency and severity of disasters have been a wake-up call and initiated substantial changes in awareness and practice. We shifted our focus from reducing hazards to managing risks. We introduced the approach of integrated risk management which combines measures of prevention, risk mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery in a circular, iterative way. It includes an integrated multi-hazard analysis.

To do this, Switzerland adopted three central DRR pillars:

First, we improved coordination among the different national, cantonal and local level decision-makers, including all sectors and affected communities.
Second, we developed hazard and risk fundamentals for the entire populated area of Switzerland. This is the prerequisite for all action to be taken in disaster risk reduction.

Third, we started investing even more in preventive measures, including what we learned about extreme events, and improved our national system for accessible, multi-hazard early warning.

In recent heavy precipitation events, the prevention measures that we have implemented and the procedures and arrangements that were practised have proven to be effective. Prevention pays off financially, socially and ecologically!

For these measures to be successful, all relevant actors – including local - must take part in the planning process from the beginning. Full and equal participation in decision-making of all socially, physically and economically vulnerable groups must be ensured.

Switzerland reaffirms its commitment to achieving the goals of the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement and the Agenda 2030. Disaster Risk Reduction is a priority in its International Cooperation. Let me cite some examples to illustrate:

- Switzerland promotes the adoption of locally adapted hazard and risk maps in nearly every country where we support DRR activities, be it in Central and South America, Central Asia or the Middle East. Hazard maps are the basis for all measures in DRR. They help to avoid constructing human settlements and critical infrastructure in high risk zones.

- In Tajikistan, we started supporting the local counterparts with disaster preparedness and protection measures. Over time, our work evolved to tackling the root causes of risks through integrated watershed management and ecosystem-based DRR and nature-based solutions for disaster resilience.

- In India, Switzerland supports State governments in the implementation of States’ climate change action plans. Swiss experts collaborate with Indian institutions for the analysis and prediction of landslides, flash floods and particularly climate related
Glacial Lake Outburst Floods in order to set up early warning systems together with local authorities.

Let me conclude by underlining four key points pertaining to furthering the Sendai Framework and the promotion of better risk governance:

First, the biggest risks lie in the global, compound consequences of multiple hazards. Risk governance arrangements must include hazards of various types, address their interconnectedness, coordinate all levels of society, and integrate technological development as both a source of risks and solutions.

Second, climate change is a game-changer, exacerbating many existing risks. The best prevention is to reduce the amplitude of climate change, but the narrow time window towards achievement is closing rapidly. With climate change effects already being felt, adaptation to increased events is paramount. This means DRR as well as civil protection concepts have to be adapted to this new level of events. Switzerland supports low carbon development pathways and strengthens adaptation capacities against climate risks.

Third, prevention reduces costs. It is much more effective to consider the potential impact of hazards in all planning processes, rather than building back after a disaster has struck.

Fourth, the biggest risks will affect both the present and the future. Therefore, we need to adopt an intergenerational approach to risk management. We need to make progress on addressing the risks that will cause major consequences on future generations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let us work together and learn from each other to achieve the targets of the Sendai Framework jointly and to lay the foundation for a better, more inclusive, safer and greener global future.