THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

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REMARKS AT

Opening Ceremony
Seventh Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

25 May 2022
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to convey the appreciation of the United Nations to President Joko Widodo and the Government and people of Indonesia for hosting the 2022 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Indonesia is a critical partner that has much to teach the world about disaster risk reduction. Your willingness to host this important gathering is a testament to the leading role that you play in sustainable development.

This is the first Global Platform since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It takes place as global crises are multiplying, with the devastating effects, particularly on the poorest and most vulnerable. People around the world are experiencing the impact of the climate emergency on a daily basis. The war in Ukraine is contributing to sky-high food and energy prices, with serious implications for the global financial system. At the same time, we face the constant threat of other disasters too.
If things continue as they are, we will experience 1.5 medium-to large-scale disasters every single day by 2030.

As it stands, disasters are already wreaking havoc on our efforts towards the achievement of the SDGs.

Our decisions and actions can inadvertently influence our risk and exposure.

This 7th session of the Global Platform, under the theme ‘From Risk to Resilience: Towards Sustainable Development for All in a COVID-19 Transformed World’, therefore takes on additional significance.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Over the next six days, we have a unique opportunity to consider the best policies to move from risk to resilience, and to take important steps to ensure that the recovery from COVID-19 puts us on track for a safe and sustainable future.

But we need to act with urgency.

First, we must turn the lessons learned from the pandemic, the biggest disaster in living memory, into action.
That means improving risk governance. Because despite our efforts, risk creation is outpacing risk reduction.

We do not yet have the governance frameworks in place to manage risks, whether from a global pandemic or a tsunami, and to mitigate their impact.

The 2022 Global Assessment Report that I recently launched in New York sets our ways in which governance systems can evolve to better address systemic risks.

It makes clear that in a world of uncertainty, understanding and reducing risk is fundamental to achieving sustainable development.

Second, we need to invest in stronger data capabilities.

Through new multilateral instruments, including the UN’s Complex Risk Analytics Fund, we want to support data ecosystems that can better anticipate, prevent and respond to complex risk -- before they turn into full-blown disasters.
This includes jointly developing risk analysis, and investing in coordination and data infrastructure that enables knowledge-sharing and joint anticipatory action.

Such investments will us help us navigate complex risks earlier, faster, and in a more targeted and efficient manner.

Third, we need to focus on the Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States that suffer disproportionately when disasters strike.

Disasters in these countries can wipe out decades of development progress and economic growth in a single event, with very serious long-term economic and social consequences.

We urgently need to step up international cooperation for prevention and disaster risk reduction in the most vulnerable countries and for the most vulnerable communities, including women and girls, people with disabilities, the poor, marginalized and isolated.

One concrete example is the provision of Early Warning Systems – a feasible and effective adaptation measure that provides more than a tenfold return on investment. Although
just 24 hours warning of a storm can reduce the damage caused by 30 per cent, less than half WMO Member States have such systems in place.

The Secretary-General has asked the World Meteorological Organization to present an action plan at the next UN Climate Conference, in Egypt in November, aimed at ensuring that every person on earth is covered by Early Warning Systems within five years.

We also need to factor disaster risk reduction into our financial frameworks. Alternative measurements, beyond Gross Domestic Product, should take account of disaster risk and resilience. The Multidimensional Vulnerability Index is one such metric.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The world is looking to this forum for leadership, wisdom and expertise.

The decisions you take can play a significant part in preventing another calamity like the COVID-19 pandemic.
We can – and we must – put our efforts firmly behind prevention and risk reduction, and build a safe, sustainable, resilient and equitable future for all.

Thank you.