The South African delegation wishes to extend its sincere appreciation to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction for convening and organising the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR2022) and the Government of Indonesia for hosting this prestigious event in the beautiful province of Bali, Indonesia.

Chairpersons,

This gathering takes place at a time when South Africa is responding and recovering from the impact of unprecedented floods, having the most severe impact on our communities along the country’s Eastern Seaboard, which left untold damage and suffering. Sadly, at least 448 people lost their lives and 88 people have been reported as missing. More than 8 000 houses were destroyed and in excess of 85 000 people have been affected.
Additionally, key national infrastructure, including South Africa’s main harbour port have been adversely affected with the floods washing away trade arteries.

Once again, this disaster has highlighted the systemic nature of risk, illustrated by interconnected and simultaneous disasters and their cascading and devastating impacts, including loss of lives and livelihoods, damage to infrastructure, displacement, exacerbated by COVID-19, climate change, environmental degradation, unplanned and rapid urbanization, whilst we also face the quadruple challenges of hunger, poverty, unemployment and inequality.

Chairpersons,

South Africa terminated its national state of disaster for Covid-19 on 4 April 2022, after 750 days that the country was in varying levels of lockdown aimed at curbing the spread of the virus. In dealing with Covid-19 and other disasters, South Africa has adopted an all of society approach whilst building on our own indigenous systems. By adopting a Risk Adjusted Strategy, we were able to minimise the negative economic impact whilst saving lives and restoring livelihoods.

Through the implementation of our continent’s Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, we are well underway to realising the vision of “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena”. However, the growing severity and frequency of climate change induced disasters, pandemics such as Covid-19 and the increasing vulnerabilities of our poorer communities, are reversing the gains already recorded.

Chairpersons,

Over the past year, South Africans were simultaneously confronted by tropical storm ‘Eloise’, droughts, the COVID-19 Pandemic and most recently the floods. South Africa’s efforts in responding to these emergencies and disasters are poised to be prompt, well-coordinated and geared to saving lives and restoring the dignity of affected communities.
All these efforts and interventions derive inspiration from the philosophy of Ubuntu which simply means “I am because you are”.

Chairpersons,

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the traditional understanding of risk and disaster risk governance. It created an opportunity for the country to embark on a comprehensive approach to disaster risk governance. To this end, the country pursues risk informed development which is putting the integration of DRR principles and values in a range of policies, strategies, frameworks and guidelines. From a strategic governance and administration perspective, South Africa has adopted the District Development Model (DDM), which is a planning model which seeks to foster an integrated and district-based delivery approach aimed at fast-tracking services to our communities and ensuring that municipalities are adequately supported as well as resourced to carry out their mandates. It is premised on “One Plan, One Budget, and One Approach” for each district or metro space. South Africa is committed to accelerating the implementation of risk informed sustainable development through inclusive social and economic programmes.

Consequently, through our all of society approach, we are strengthening the capability and capacity of municipalities, institutions of traditional leadership, community organisations and all organs of state to implement and mainstream inclusive disaster risk reduction and management strategies.

Collaborating with our South African Weather Services (SAWS) we also embarked on programmes to create disaster-aware and climate smart communities through, amongst other things, implementing Impact Based Forecasting, which is a component of the South Africa-Multi Hazard Early Warning System (MHEWS), and this is bearing fruit at community level. As recent as Saturday, 21 May 2022, a level 10 alert for disruptive rain was issued to communities in the KZN province to alert them of the impact of the expected inclement weather conditions and many at risk people could as a result, move to safety in time.
The congruence and synergy of provisions of the South African Disaster Management Act, 57 of 2002, and the SFDRR require that South African organs of state develop and implement comprehensive disaster management plans. These plans encompass strategies to:

- Assess, prevent and reduce the risk of disasters;
- mitigate the severity or consequences of disasters;
- facilitate emergency preparedness;
- ensure rapid and effective response to disasters and post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation.

Together with our stakeholders, we also commit to rehabilitate and reconstruct all the damaged infrastructure of the recent floods so that we risk-proof it as we ‘build back better’

Ultimately, we aim to build risk informed, resilient, sustainable, prosperous, cohesive, connected and climate smart communities. South Africa is indeed making progress in meeting the targets of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015-2030.

In conclusion, Chairperson, South Africa seizes this opportunity to move “From Risk to Resilience: Towards Sustainable Development for All in a COVID-19 Transformed World”.

I thank you