

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF
NADMO, HON. ERIC NANA AGYEMANG PREMPEH ON THE
CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR DISASTER
REDUCTION – OCTOBER 13TH 2017**

VENUE: UNIVERSITY OF GHANA (MENSAH SABBAAH HALL)

TIME: 3PM

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am honoured to be given the opportunity to speak at such an important event as this which is the World Disaster Risk Reduction Day. As a disaster manager, I greatly commend this celebration as it promotes a global culture of disaster reduction, including disaster prevention and preparedness. It motivates us to look at how people and communities around the World are reducing their exposure to disasters. I particularly commend the University of Ghana Disaster Prevention club for being proactive to promote disaster risk management this day. It is a lesson to the youth of Ghana that they have a key role to play in disaster risk reduction.

The young ones today will be the adult tomorrow. They therefore have to build disaster risk reduction consciousness from today.

I am happy to inform you that we are rolling up disaster conscious program next year called “**Catch them young**”. This will involve a massive campaign to mainstream disaster risk reduction in the school curricular and in the built environment. Schools will be encouraged to have disaster reduction committees and some teachers will be trained to

lead this agenda in the schools.

We are going to make school children, and for that matter, the youth of this country ambassadors of change in the drive to build national resilience to disasters.

As Ghana joins the global community to celebrate Disaster Risk Reduction, we need to be reminded that the frequency and destructive impact of disasters on our society continue to increase. Today, hundreds of millions of people live at risk from threat of several natural and human induced disasters, including rainstorms and floods, army worm infestation, droughts, fires, earth quakes and landslides, social conflicts, road accidents, diseases and epidemics, hurricanes etc.

The recent events recorded this year includes heavy rainstorm which caused a huge tree on top of Kintampo waterfalls to fall on swimmers which included students from Wenchi Senior High School and University of Mines and Technology, Tarkwa, claiming **40 lives**. The outbreak of army worm infestation nation-wide and centipede attack wreaked havoc on farms and appears to threaten food security as farmers continue to count their losses. Gas explosion at Ghana Household Utilities Manufacturing Company in Sekondi-Takoradi injured hundreds of people.

In what appeared to be a last straw to Ghanaians, the nation witnessed a horrible spectacle of gas explosion on 7th October 2017. This explosion claimed the lives of **7 people** and visited various degrees of injury on **132 people**. The incident affected 44 houses and more than **90 cars** were burnt. **In all 359 people were affected.**

The experience we have had in the October 7 gas explosion shows a woeful lack of knowledge of fire dynamics on the part of the populace.

People come out openly to witness fire incidents! In the event of such disasters people should not get close to do video recordings or take still pictures using the mobile phone.

I am using this opportunity to advise all to be careful with the behaviour of fire as it kills fast.

Let us desist from using unqualified artisans to do wiring in our homes. Instead use qualified and registered professionals who will ensure that things are done right for your own safety. Let us ensure that the burglar proofs we use in our homes do not turn us into hopeless prisoners who will have no way of escape when there is fire.

Landlords have to clearly demarcate exits routes in their homes so people are not trapped in the event of fire. Owners of hotels and managers of public places also have the obligation to ensure that emergency exits are provided and clearly demarcated.

We should also manage the kitchen such that it does not trigger disasters for us. For example, receiving calls in the kitchen while fire is on can be a recipe or a trigger for fire outbreak.

Ladies and gentlemen, we all recall the Mud Flow incident which happened in Sierra Leone recently. On one side of the mountain slope it was a landslide and on another side it was a mud flow. The volume of mud and rocks that descended the heavily eroded mountain and the number of people who lost their lives in the process should make all of us sober.

It is aptly that this year's world disaster reduction day has the theme "**Home Safe Home**". Yes, a safer home is really home. How all those

who were locked up in hospitals and those who ended up in the grave in these instances wished they were living comfortably in their homes.

Ladies and gentlemen as an eye witness of what happened in Sierra Leone, I am alarmed as to the way people are managing areas that are clearly disaster prone.

People are developing along fault lines in wanton disregard for caution as well as future consequences. Many buildings are springing up in the MC Carthy Hills and Weija areas with rapidity as never before. The structural integrity of many of such building is bankrupt. Some even block accessible roads. Others embark on dangerous activities in the area that further undermine the stability of buildings.

Ladies and gentlemen the major cause of the vulnerability in this country has been indiscipline.

We show indiscipline in our construction practices. People build in water ways, not that they do not know the consequences. They throw rubbish anywhere including water bodies.

These, apart from blocking free flow of streams also bring about diseases leading to death.

Planning schemes are thrown overboard by builders leading to situations where roads and streets are blocked making it difficult for emergency responders to respond effectively during emergencies. In the process people die because of other peoples actions. We are grossly undisciplined. We cannot continue this path as a nation.

We also use this day to make the humble appeal that Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies, and all relevant bodies ensure that all public places; be it filling stations, community centres, shopping malls, markets, etc. have water hydrants installed.

NADMO has now been empowered to issue Disaster Risk Reduction Compliant Certificate on buildings including those having public facilities. I wish to stress that installation of fire hydrants will be a major requirement for awarding the certificate.

NADMO is currently operating under a new Act, Act 927 of 2016.

We are developing the legislative instrument to implement the Act more fully. These regulations will detail more on what will be required of individuals and organisations with respect to disaster risk management.

We will also collaborate with all private organisations, Ministries, Departments, Agencies, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies and request them to establish Disaster Risk Reduction Desks in their work places. We therefore envisage that come next year, from Flag Staff House in Accra, to District Assembly in Paga, and from Tewa Secondary school in Brong Ahafo region, to Cisneros Hotel in Sogakope, and from Peace Fm in Accra to Tamale Airport in Tamale, there will be disaster risk reduction officers manning disaster risk reduction desks. These officers will ensure safety and disaster risk reduction compliance environment in their organisations.

Ladies and gentlemen, we do not want to sit on our loins for serious events such as what happened in Sierra Leone to catch up with us.

NADMO has now decided to intensify its collaboration with Ministries, Departments and Agencies and Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies to ensure that our cities are resilient. A safe home is really home, “home safe home”.

I wish to emphasize that NADMO now has the empowerment backed by law to demolish buildings that are certified to be hazardous or in dangerous location and those that put the public in danger. Even though

this power will be used sparingly we will not allow potentially dangerous building to stand.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the need to build our resilience and reduce the vulnerability of our society has become more crucial than ever. We have no choice than to develop and enhance the capacities of individuals, organisations and communities to effectively manage their risks. Vulnerability to disasters can only be minimized through effective Disaster Risk Reduction.

On this day that we join the world to celebrate the international Day for Disaster reduction I wish to make a clarion call on the youth of Ghana to stand up and live above the indiscipline they have inherited and strive to help this generation turn things around for a brighter future.

I also extend thanks to our development partners like the UNDP and all UN Agencies as well as bilateral organisations who have been supporting this course.

Finally I call every Tom, Dick and Harry to join hands to make our nation resilient to disasters, for posterity will not forgive us if we fail to do so.

I wish you all a happy celebration.