

**OFFICIAL ADDRESS IN OBSERVANCE OF**  
**INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR**  
**DISASTER RISK REDUCTION 2020**

*Remarks by Hon Wendy C. Phipps*

Co-Chair, Disaster Mitigation Council &  
Minister of International Trade, Commerce, Labour & Consumer Affairs  
Government of St. Kitts & Nevis

*Tuesday, October 13, 2020*



**Fellow Citizens & Residents of St. Kitts & Nevis:**

Today, Tuesday, October 13, 2020, our Federation joins the rest of the United Nations Member States in observing ***International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction***. This year's ***IDDRR*** observances are being held under the theme of ***#ItsAllAboutGovernance***<sup>1</sup>. The theme has been deliberately selected to illustrate the imperative for successful disaster risk governance which must be measured in terms of the following: (i) the number of lives that have been saved from disasters of various kinds; (ii) the reduction in the number of persons who are affected by disasters; and (iii) the lessening of economic losses due to disasters. It also stands to reason that disaster risk reduction demands that governments adequately invest in a multi-sectoral approach towards disaster risk reduction strategies that are inclusive of policies for key matters such as public health, climate change adaptation,

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that there is no spelling error in the theme re: the use of the contraction "Its" and the absence of spacing between words. The theme, as written, is the copyrighted hashtag of the UNDDR.

environmental protection, land use, education, energy and water resources, agriculture, and building codes.

Thus far, the year 2020 has proven to be a colossal test of the disaster risk governance capacity of every single country on the planet. This is due, in large measure, to the catastrophic impact that has been created by the Covid-19 pandemic which has already claimed in excess of 1 million lives over the past seven months. Of course, even in the midst of Covid-19 other customary disasters have continued unabated. These include wild fires, hurricanes, earthquakes, heat waves, landslides and floods that persist in impacting the lives and livelihoods of global communities and populations without regard for colour, creed, race, gender, geographical location or socio-economic status.

Since its inception in 1989, observances of the ***International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction*** have been organised in an effort to achieve two core objectives:

- 1) To create a global culture of risk awareness and disaster reduction;
- 2) To celebrate the ways in which global communities and individuals are  
(a) reducing their exposure to disasters; and (b) raising awareness of the importance of controlling risks that are being faced by these same communities and individuals.

***International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction*** is an ideal opportunity to be reminded of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction that was adopted by the UN Member States at the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction that was convened in Sendai, Japan in 2015. Essentially, the Sendai Framework is based on the unanimous agreement that it is the local communities that are most heavily impacted when disasters happen - based on the loss of lives, the socio-economic instability that can be created, and the displacement of countless numbers of affected persons in disaster zones. The Sendai Framework – which is intended to guide disaster risk reduction programming until 2030 – also demands a people-centred and action-oriented approach to disaster risk management, regardless of the relative sizes of disasters, be they natural hazards, or be deemed to have been caused by man-made, environmental, biological or technological actions.

Our citizens and residents should be encouraged by the fact that the work programme of our National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has been guided by the Sendai Framework, which is comprised of some seven (7) global targets and four (4) priorities for action, in order to reduce existing disaster risks and prevent new ones.

These seven targets – which are to be assessed based on the reduction in disaster-related losses - are intended to be met during the years 2016-2022, and they are as follows:

- 2016 – Target 1:** Substantially reduce global disaster mortality by 2030, aiming to lower the average per 100,000 global mortality rate in the decade 2020-2030, compared to the period 2005-2015.
- 2017 – Target 2:** Substantially reduce the number of people affected globally by 2030, aiming to lower the average global figure per 100,000 in the decade 2020-2030, compared to the period 2005-2015.
- 2018 – Target 3:** Reduce direct disaster economic loss in relation to the global gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030.
- 2019 – Target 4:** Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, among them health and educational facilities, including boosting their resilience by 2030.
- 2020 – Target 5:** Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020.
- 2021 – Target 6:** Substantially enhance international cooperation in developing countries through adequate and sustainable support to complement their national actions for implementation of the present Framework by 2030.
- 2022 – Target 7:** Substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to people by 2030.

These targets are intended to be met by adherence to the following four (4) priorities:

- (i) Understanding disaster risk;
- (ii) Investing in disaster reduction for resilience;

- (iii) Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk;  
*and*
- (iv) Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to  
"Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

It is expected that these targets and priorities of the Sendai Framework are to be met within the next 10 years, the same time by which UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are to mature.

NEMA has made a decision to observe ***International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction 2020*** via a week of activities meant to sensitize the public to the work of the Agency, its role in disaster mitigation, and the imperative for community and citizens' engagement insofar as disaster risk reduction is concerned. This week-long public awareness campaign would have started on Sunday, October 11<sup>th</sup> with a church service at the Immanuel Methodist Church in Sandy Point. On Monday, October 12<sup>th</sup> there was also a special programme launch entitled "Face of the Districts" and the debut of an instructional staff video. Other activities planned for the Week include the following:

**Tuesday, October 13<sup>th</sup>** - Official Address by the Co-Chair of the Disaster Mitigation Council, Hon Wendy Phipps, on the occasion of ***International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction*** & a Virtual Open House;

**Wednesday, October 14<sup>th</sup>** – Staff participation in Family Feud & the continuation of "Face of the Districts";

**Thursday, October 15<sup>th</sup>** – Community Outreach activities & broadcast of an instructional video;

**Friday, October 16<sup>th</sup>** – Staff development programme and broadcast of “The Face of the Youth Ambassadors”; *and*

**Saturday, October 17<sup>th</sup>** – Volcanic Hazard Table Top Exercise for the NEMA Districts.

All of these activities are meant to strengthen the capacity of NEMA’s staff; solidify partnerships and collaboration with national stakeholders such as district groups, other critical state agencies such as the Ministry of National Security’s Fire and Rescue Department, emergency support agencies such as the Ministry of Health, and non-governmental agency (NGO) partners such as the Red Cross. The management and staff of NEMA wish to use this special occasion to extend sincere gratitude to all of its stakeholders and the members of the general public who continue to partner with the Agency in the common mission of disaster risk reduction meant to save lives and reduce losses due to man-made disasters and natural hazards.

The Federal Government of St. Kitts and Nevis commends the management and staff of NEMA for their untiring efforts to help keep the people of St. Kitts and Nevis well informed and safe, insofar as disaster mitigation and risk reduction are concerned. This is particularly noteworthy, given the exceptionally heavy demands that have been placed on the small human resource base of NEMA as a result of the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic - for which the Agency has had to play a pivotal

leadership role. On behalf of the Federal Cabinet, and the Co-Chair of the Disaster Mitigation Council, the Hon Vincent Byron, I congratulate NEMA's staff for their service to St. Kitts and Nevis and extend best wishes to the Agency for the successful staging of the week of activities designed to observe the ***2020 International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction*** which is being observed under the theme **#ItsAllAboutGovernance**.

Thank you for listening.