

**INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF GEN N C VIJ, PVSM,
UYSM,AVSM (RETD), VICE CHAIRMAN, NDMA AT
THE SECOND INDIA DISASTER MANAGEMENT
CONGRESS, 4-6 NOV 09 : VIGYAN BHAWAN**

- My Colleagues – Members, NDMA
- Shri G K Pillai, Union Home Secretary,
- Dr. Nitin Desai, Member, PM's Council on Climate Change,
- Dr. Amit Mitra, Secretary General, FICCI,
- Ms. Margareta Wahlstorm, UN Asstt. Secretary General, Disaster Risk Reduction,
- Ms. Isabel Guerrero, Vice President (South Asia), World Bank,
- Dr. A. S. Arya,
- Ms. Aruna Roy, Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan,
- Shri P G Dhar Chakrabarti, ED, NIDM,
- Distinguished delegates,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I have great pleasure in inaugurating the Second India Disaster Management Congress, which brings together organizations and individuals from multiple disciplines with the objective of advancing and promoting disaster risk reduction.

2. In recent years, we have witnessed a number of major disasters in Asia which have caused untold miseries and havoc to life and property. The impact of Indian Ocean Tsunami, Kashmir Earthquake, Sichuan Earthquake and Nargis Cyclone still being felt by the affected communities. This Congress is also being held in the **backdrop** of the worst ever floods in the last 100 years in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh and Kosi Floods in August 2008 which affected the lives and livelihood of over 3 million people and destroyed nearly 1000 villages in Bihar. All these disasters do once again remind us about the need and urgency to ‘**Centre-Stage**’ the aspect of ‘Disaster Management’ in the process of Governance of the nations. It is also a fact that it is not easy for any government to cope with the challenges of management of disasters all by themselves. International Agencies, Educational and Scientific Institutions, Corporate Sector, Community Based Organizations and the

Civil Society have an important role to play in this endeavour. I am glad that in this Congress all these aspects will be highlighted in the coming days.

3. We, being the **Apex Body** for ‘Disaster Management’ in the Country, have taken concerted steps to realize the vision of a “Disaster Resilient” India. The NIDM has assisted ably in our effort. We have launched multi-pronged initiatives in all aspects of disaster management with the support of the **highest policy making** echelons in the country to the **grassroot** level. I can say with great sense of satisfaction that we have not only embarked on the journey of ensuring a culture of prevention, mitigation and preparedness but have also taken definitive steps to **qualitatively enhance** timely and well coordinated, thus effective response capabilities.

4. Let me share a good news. The National Policy on Disaster Management prepared by the NDMA, in consultation with all the Ministries, States and other Stakeholders, has been approved by the Cabinet and will be released shortly. The policy highlights the ‘paradigm shift’ from the erstwhile relief-centric

response to a proactive prevention, mitigation and preparedness driven approach. The objective of the National Policy is to build a safer and disaster resilient India by developing a holistic, proactive, multi-disaster oriented and technology driven strategy through a culture of prevention, mitigation, preparedness and response.

5. One of our major thrust areas has been to **‘Mainstream the disaster management in the governance of the country’**, which means that based on guidelines issued by us, Central Ministries and States are preparing their plans. Plans will result into measures both structural and non-structural. Herein, I must mention that the Finance Ministry based on our recommendations and details given to them have incorporated a paragraph on “Self-Certified disaster resilience’ in the EFC and CNE check memos. Finances for structural measures both plan and non-plan are being supported by the Planning Commission, Finance Ministry and Finance Commission. For non-structural measures, a number of support initiatives have been started. With this process starting, the entire new habitats in the Country by Central Ministries & States should be disaster resilient. We

are also working out similar arrangements for the construction in the civil field – corporate and private houses. For private houses, banks are giving loans only for disaster resilient houses.

6. To bring about holistic management of disasters and preparation of plans at the National, State and District levels, we have issued a number of comprehensive guidelines on disaster specific and thematic subjects. Each of these guidelines has been prepared with the participation of States, different Ministries and Departments of Government of India, Knowledge based and Scientific Institutions, NGOs, and Community Based Organizations. The roadmap for implementation of these guidelines has also been spelt out. So far, 12 guidelines have been issued and many more are in the pipelines.

7. Towards Mitigation, we have a number of Mitigation Projects on the anvil. The first one to start will be the ‘**National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project**’ with the collaboration of the World Bank. This Project in Andhra Pradesh and Orissa will be launched by the end of this year before it is taken up in the other States and UTs. It is a project of 307 million \$ at this stage and

more financial resources will flow in as other states join the project.

8. To further strengthen our structural and non-structural measures to mitigate the effects of natural disasters, we have initiated National Risk Mitigation Projects on '**Earthquakes**'. This project will be run over the entire country in Zones II to V. The major effort will be directed towards Capacity Building and training of Engineers, Architects, Masons etc. The Detailed Project Report (DPR) is now ready and hopefully we will be able to start this project early next year.

9. Besides these, there will be projects on **Communication and Information System** at national level and also a pilot project for **School Safety** in Zone IV and V States. The preparation of DPRs for projects on floods, landslides and medical are also in the process. Similarly, NDMA is also working on two pilot projects for Medical preparedness namely (i) Project for Mobile hospitals for Mass Casualty Management at Disaster Sites and (ii) Creation of two model CBRN Casualty

Treatment Centres at Delhi, one in a large Civil Hospital and another in the Army (R&R) Hospital.

10. Another important project is connected with creation of a National Reserve for 4,00,000 people, to assist and provide for people in the camps, in the wake of a disaster.

11. In the field of Scientific and Technological initiatives, our major initiatives are in the field of (i) developing a GIS Platform (ii) PSHA and finally (iii) **Vulnerability Analysis and Risk Assessment**. We are also conceptualizing the 'National Disaster Management Information System' for quality decision making and effective response during disasters. Of course, the work has already begun for printing maps of larger scales like 1:1000m.

12. In the field of International Cooperation, a project on 'Disaster Risk Management' has been completed in partnership with UNDP, extending over a period of 7 years. It covered 169 highly disaster prone districts covering 17 states in the country. We have benefited a lot from this experience and are now in the midst of initiating '**Disaster Risk Reduction Programme**' in

collaboration with UNDP. The objective of this programme is to support **Central and State Government** Projects and initiatives by providing critical inputs that would enhance the **efficiency and effectiveness** of these efforts. The project would also include Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building for Disaster Risk Reduction.

13. Disaster Education is another major plank to revolutionize the concept of disaster management in the country. We in partnership with Ministry of Human Resource Development and other Ministries and Organizations concerned, have taken steps to institutionalize the inclusion of Disaster Management curricula in the Higher and technical education besides agriculture and most importantly medical fields.

14. In order to strengthen the institutional framework in the states and districts, we are collaborating with 'Indira Gandhi National Open University', for starting a Pilot Project on Capacity Building of representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions, Urban Local Bodies and officials at the District level in 55 districts covering 11 States.

15. We are also running training programmes on Disaster Management in 'Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel National Police Academy' for the Probationers and selected Officers at the District and State level. Similar courses are starting in Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration in November. Efforts are on also to institutionalize this training in the Forest Service, Railways and the Armed Forces.

16. In our effort for Capacity Building in Mass Casualty Management, Medical Officers are being trained in Basic Life Support and Advanced Trauma Life Support in collaboration with Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and Trauma Centre of All India Institute of Medical Sciences on regular basis. In the field of Medical Preparedness for response to Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Emergencies, training has also been initiated in collaboration with Defence Research and Development Organization and Bhabha Atomic Research Centre.

17. To generate awareness at the grass root levels and involve the communities in disaster response, we are running Mock Exercises at the **district level** on both the natural and man-made disasters. Already 76 Exercises have been run and 112 are planned for the year 2009-2010. These include Mock Exercises on Mass Casualty Management in major cities of the country and exercises on Chemical Disasters for 33 MAH units. These exercises have made a tremendous impact and over 12 lakh people have been sensitized. In the past three years, we have conducted these exercises in almost all the States and Union Territories of the Country, covering 74 districts.

18. Another major initiative to create community awareness is our 'School Safety Programmes' wherein we have started conducting Mock Drills in the schools. So far we have covered approximately 43 schools in the NCR and other States. We want to make this a country-wide initiative and are working out modalities to enhance the scope.

19. Our emphasis on training and equipping of the National Disaster Response Force has improved the quality of response in the country. Their role in Kosi Floods, Aila Cyclone and Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh Floods is an ample illustration of this fact. During the non-disaster period National Disaster Response Force is also involved in the Community Training programmes in their respective areas of responsibility. As I mentioned earlier, we are also constituting National Disaster Response Reserves for 4,00,000 people of essential relief stores and are locating these in the existing locations of NDRF Battalions.

20. On the direction of the Cabinet, we have prepared an exhaustive strategy for the H1N1 pandemic. We have laid down the strategy to fight this menace at the National level and this is being implemented now. We are also focusing on the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear emergencies and are making a National Plan on the same in coordination with NCMC. For the Commonwealth Games, the plans for CBRN security are being conceptualized by us. This will also include

deployment of National Disaster Response Force in large number.

21. Last but not the least, we are in dialogue with the Corporate and Industrial houses to involve them in pre-disaster preparedness activities as a part of their Corporate Social Responsibility. They are being encouraged to take up such projects in their areas of interest. The support could be in the form of communication facilities, school safety, providing medical ambulances and ‘mobile hospitals’ etc.

22. In these few minutes, I have tried to give you an overview of the policies and projects being pursued by the NDMA. I must say that these are initial but most concrete steps in the long journey to realize the vision of “Disaster Resilient India”. I am sure that the participants of this Congress will come forward with fresh ideas for addressing the problems of Disaster Management in the Country and the SAARC Region at large. I am confident that your deliberations will result in specific recommendations and action points for everyone to take note of.

23. I once again congratulate the organizers of this Congress and wish all the delegates a very fruitful and enriching experience in the next three days.

Thank you.

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