Remarks by Ms. Janet Rogan, UN Resident Coordinator
(read by Mr Sergio Valdini, Deputy Country Director, United Nations Development Programme)

Handover Ceremony of copies of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction for the Visually Impaired
Lusaka, Zambia, Friday 13 October 2017

• Guest of Honour, Honourable Vincent Mwale, MP, Minister of Local Government
• Ms Yande Mwape, National Coordinator, DMMU
• The Representative, ZAFOD
• The Media
• Ladies and gentlemen

I am delighted to represent the United Nations in Zambia at this important event as we witness the handover of copies of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) for the Visually Impaired. This ceremony is at the heart of the United Nations Human Rights Based Approach to Programming. The United Nations values the participation of everyone in development. In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, no one should be left behind. Within the context of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the United Nations values the contribution of People Living with Disabilities such as the blind in all development areas. Disability is, as a result, referenced in various parts of the SDGs and specifically in parts related to education, growth and employment, inequality.
Guest of Honour, as you are aware Leave no one behind is the overarching and unifying principle in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, underpinned by human rights, gender equality and women’s empowerment; sustainability and resilience; and Accountability.

The International Day for Disaster Reduction began in 1989, after a call by the United Nations General Assembly for a day to promote a global culture of risk-awareness and disaster reduction. Held every 13 October, the day celebrates how people and communities around the world are reducing their exposure to disasters and raising awareness about the importance of reining in the risks that they face.

The 2017 commemoration continues as part of the "Sendai Seven" campaign, centered on the seven targets of the Sendai Framework. This year the focus is on Target B which aims to reduce the number of people affected by disasters by 2030.

I am happy to note that the Government is localizing Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction together with the SDGs, the African Union Agenda 2063, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (through its Nationally Determined Contribution) in the Seventh National Development Plan (2017-2021). The Sendai Framework from Miami and Puerto Rico to Barbuda and Havana, the devastation of this year’s hurricane season across Latin America and the Caribbean serves as a reminder that the impacts of climate change know no borders.

In recent weeks, Category 5 hurricanes have brought normal life to a standstill for millions of people in the Caribbean and on the American mainland. Harvey, Irma and Maria have been particularly damaging. The impact is not confined to this region. The record floods across Bangladesh, India and Nepal have made life miserable for some 40 million people. More than 1,200 people have died and many people have lost their homes, crops have been destroyed, and many workplaces have been inundated. Meanwhile, in Africa, over the last 18 months 20
countries have declared drought emergencies, with major displacement taking place across the Horn region.

For those countries that are least developed the impact of disasters can be severe, stripping away livelihoods and progress on health and education; for developed and middle-income countries, the economic losses from infrastructure alone can be massive; for both, these events reiterate the need to act on a changing climate that threatens only more frequent and more severe disasters.

Natural disasters such as droughts and floods caused by human-induced global warming have not spared Zambia. We have over the years seen peoples’ livelihoods and infrastructure destroyed. In support Zambia’s response to Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction efforts, the United Nations has supported a joint programme with the Government of the Republic of Zambia on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction to develop capacity and investments at national and local levels for effective multi-sectoral and multi-level response to climate change.

As part of disaster risk reduction efforts, the United Nations is also strengthening climate information and early warning systems in Zambia and other Eastern and Southern African countries.

This project is targeting rural and urban populations attain sustainable livelihoods; have improved quality of life and wellbeing, reducing people’s vulnerability from the risk of Climate Change, natural and man-made disasters and environmental degradation; and helping targeted government institutions to provide human rights-based policies, frameworks and services.
The successful implementation of the Sendai Framework is critical to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, notably the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. To implement the SDGs, we need to match the progress we have made in reducing loss of life from disasters by making similar advances in reducing the numbers of people affected. Disasters are gateways to poverty and distress for many vulnerable people living in low and middle-income countries. Large-scale displacement can increase migration flows. Reducing the risks which accrue from rapid urbanization, poverty, environmental deterioration and climate change is best achieved by avoiding the creation of these risks in the first place.

We are all responsible, and the success of the SDGs depends on it. While not every natural hazard has devastating consequences, a combination of natural, cultural, social and political factors contributes to disasters. Over the last twenty years, over 1.35 million have died because of their vulnerability and exposure to natural hazards with women and girls bearing a heavy toll; and over four billion have been displaced and left homeless, injured or in need of emergency assistance. Deaths due to disasters from weather- and climate-related events (floods, storms and heatwaves) account for most of disaster deaths in most years and there has been a sustained rise, more than doubling, over the past forty years. More than half of disaster mortality is caused by extreme geophysical disaster events, primarily earthquakes, including tsunamis, and volcanic eruptions.

As I close, I wish to remind us all that we need to put in place mitigation measures and be proactive before disaster strikes. This calls for careful planning, allocation of resources and working in a multi sectoral approach and not in silos. Working together, we can achieve a lot, reduce duplication and optimize resources for the greater good of the Zambian people. It is my hope that copies of the Sendai Framework being handed over today will help the blind in Zambia to be aware of disaster risk reduction information and like everyone else be prepared.

I THANK YOU