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## Plateforme Mondiale pour la Réduction des Risques de Catastrophes 2019

### Cérémonie d'ouverture

Genève, le 15 mai 2019

Discours prononcé par le Secrétaire d'Etat Manuel Sager

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Distinguished Deputy Prime Minister, His Excellency Mahmadoir Zokirzoda, from Tajikistan

Distinguished Deputy Prime Minister, His Excellency Enkhtuvshin Ulziisaikhan, Mongolia

Distinguished Deputy Prime Minister, Her Excellency Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, Malaysia

Her Excellency Tarja Halonen, Former President of Finland

Ministers, Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very warm welcome to all participants in the 6th Global Platform for DRR in the name of the Government of Switzerland, [and the **UNDRR**]. It is a special privilege for me and my country to host this conference in cooperation with the **UNDRR**.

**We are meeting in Geneva at a time where** global GDP increased sevenfold from 1980 to 2017. The global population is healthier, and lives 20 years longer than 50 years ago. Education is now available to millions more children – boys **and** girls.

So, if things are going so well, why are we here?

**Despite all this progress**, we are facing some dire realities. In last year's *State of the World* report, the FAO painted an alarming picture: for the third year in a row, hunger in the world has been rising. The number of people facing chronic food deprivation has dramatically increased again. Heat, drought, flooding, landslides and earthquakes are part of the reason why people have to leave their homes and look for safer places to live, and to be able to find food for their families. Disasters force 50,000 people – *every day!* – to leave their homes.

**My country was in a similar situation** in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Rural families had to leave their homes because of hunger and poverty. Episodes of cold and humid climate, of widespread flooding – and loss of agricultural production – drove them into poverty. People left Switzerland to settle in other countries in search of a better life; a process we observe today, in the opposite direction.

Yet, with investments in risk prevention and mitigation, Switzerland was able to increase its arable land in the floodplains. This was one of the factors which significantly contributed to its successful industrial development. Similarly, risk management in mountainous areas allowed the tourist industry to develop, which is still an important source of income for those living in the Swiss Alps.

Today, climate change creates new risks, including droughts and flooding.

**We also have to adapt and prepare for other** man-made risks, such as terrorism and cyber-attacks which challenge the resilience of our interconnected societies.

We hope and trust that technological and scientific progress and financial resources will help us deal with these risks.

But, we must also raise the level of awareness and collaborate: among countries, with civil society organisations, academia and in particular with the private sector as a catalyst for innovation and technological progress.

Our conference this week will focus on key elements for achieving the targets of the Sendai Agenda and the SDGs: **taking stock of progress made, risk-informed investment**, and the impact of **climate change**.

We all know, investment in DRR yields multiple benefits in averted losses. But, we have to act on this knowledge and increase DRR in our development work with more determination.

Ladies and gentlemen, this week participants from roughly 150 countries have gathered in Geneva – government representatives, civil society, the private sector and academia. This large and inclusive representation of stakeholders gives me hope.

Let me extend a word of gratitude to the UNDRR for enabling so many to participate.

**Our voices will be heard.** Our deliberations will be summarised in the Chair's Summary on Friday. This crucial conference document will be a milestone not only for us, but for the UN more generally. Our Chairs' Summary will be submitted to the High-level Political Forum of the United Nations, held in New York in July.

I hope that **our political commitment** will lead to increased global investments in resilience building, which is so much more cost-effective than dealing with the aftermath of a disaster.

I wish you a constructive and fruitful conference.