

## INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

Press Release No: xxxxxx/23

Date: 10 November, 2023

Venue: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

### AFRICAN UNION ADDRESSES CATASTROPHIC 2023 DISASTERS, CALLS FOR COMPREHENSIVE RESILIENCE BUILDING



In response to the unprecedented wave of climatic and geophysical hazards that have plagued the African continent throughout 2023, the African Union Commission (AUC) is rallying Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and partners to enhance resilience and preparedness. This call to action emerged during the recent event, *Building Resilience after Cyclone Freddy*, part of the AUC's 'Fridays of the Commission' series, held at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 27 October 2023. Representatives from more than 24 Embassies in Addis Ababa and 8 donor and implementing agencies attended the event.

Ambassador Fathallah Sijilmassi, Director General of the African Union Commission, inaugurated the first 'Friday of the Commission,' for the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Unit, emphasising the rising frequency of disasters and declaring 2023 as one of the deadliest years on record for Africa. The African continent bore the brunt of catastrophic events, from the impact of Cyclone Freddy across Malawi, Mozambique, and Madagascar to the devastating floods in Libya, the earthquake in Morocco, and prolonged droughts in the Horn of Africa. These disasters served as a stark reminder that such events result in substantial losses that ultimately impact the economies of countries.

In 2022 alone, the economic toll amounted to **US\$38.5 billion (AMHEWAS annual report 2022)**, surpassing the combined GDPs of 15 African nations. Recognizing this reality, the African Union Commission stresses the need for proactive measures to mitigate losses, especially as the continent grapples with increasing disaster risks driven by climate change.

The event featured insightful presentations by prominent officials and experts discussing recovery priorities and efforts in the affected regions. Among these speakers were Mr Elack Olivier Andriakaja, General of the Division and Director General of the Bureau National de la Gestion des Risques et Catastrophes (BNGRC) in Madagascar; Ms Luísa Celma Caetano Meque, President of Instituto Nacional de Gestão e Redução do Risco de Desastres (INGD); Mr Charles Kalemba, Commissioner for the Department of Disaster Management Affairs in Malawi; and Ms Rita Missal, Recovery Advisor at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Ms Missal provided insights into recovery and resilience-building priorities in the affected area, and presented a proposed recovery programme to assist the affected countries.

Participants viewed a video developed by the Africa Union Commission's Disaster Risk Reduction Unit, which documented the [visit to the AMHEWAS Situation Room by H.E. Filipe Nyusi](#), President of the Republic of Mozambique and current Champion of Disaster Risk Management for the African Union. The video also presented an overview of an assessment of the [impact of Cyclone Freddy](#) in Madagascar, Mozambique and Malawi, jointly conducted by the AUC, SADC Humanitarian Operations centre and the UNDP. The video also featured stories from affected communities.

In his intervention, H.E. Mr Assoumani Youssouf Mondah, the Ambassador of the Union of the Comoros to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the African Union and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, noted that the island state is always on alert from November to March – the cyclone season. He underscored the need to increase the visibility of hazards like cyclones in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). He stressed the need for complementarity between subnational, national, regional and Continental multi-hazard early warning mechanisms and underscored the big gap in resource mobilisation.

The call to action extends to enhanced capacity-building programmes and collaborative efforts among Member States, RECs and partners. Notable among these efforts are the current programmes and projects presented during the event, which include the Africa Multi-hazard Early Warning and Early Action System ([AMHEWAS](#)), the [Africa Urban Resilience Programme](#), and the [Sahel Resilience Project](#), along with initiatives in the pipeline, namely the Joint Regional Programme for Smart Urban Resilience in Africa, and, the Resilience Initiative Africa.

Colonel Aritiana Fabien Faly, representing the Bureau National de Gestion des Risques et des Catastrophes of Madagascar, emphasized the importance of continually updating Member States' governments on follow-up actions for implementing recovery efforts. He also called for the involvement of all stakeholders working in affected countries to help shape local and national planning. Strengthening capacity-building at subnational and national levels to enhance overall disaster resilience was another key focus.

The Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment ([ARBE](#)) organised this event through the Sustainable Environment and Blue Economy (SEBE) Directorate's Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Unit.

### **About Fridays of the Commission**

The African Union Commission hosts the Fridays of the Commission, which constitute a series of conference debates on current, political and cultural issues pertinent to the African continent and which give opportunities to different stakeholders to discuss development issues from an African perspective.

#### **For media enquiry:**

**Mr. Molalet Tsedeke**, Information and Communications Directorate | African Union Commission|+251-911-630 631; [Molalett@africa-union.org](mailto:Molalett@africa-union.org)

**Ms. Maryanne Muriuki**, Communications Analyst, Disaster Risk Reduction Unit, Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment, AU Commission. Email: [MuriukiM@africa-union.org](mailto:MuriukiM@africa-union.org)

**Information and Communication Directorate**, African Union Commission | E-mail: [DIC@africa-union.org](mailto:DIC@africa-union.org)  
Web: au.int | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia | Follow Us: [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [YouTube](#)