

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**VIDEO MESSAGE TO THE WORLD CONFERENCE
ON DISASTER REDUCTION
Kobe, 18-22 January 2005**

Dear friends,

Let me thank the people and Government of Japan for hosting this conference, for its leadership on disaster reduction worldwide, and its leading role in the response tsunami disaster in Asia. Such leadership is now essential.

Rarely has a tragedy made a conference so topical and timely as this one. The tsunami was an unprecedented, global natural disaster. I think we are already seeing an unprecedented, global response.

But it's not enough to pick up the pieces when a tragedy like this happens.

We must draw and act on every lesson we can, and prevent such tragedies occurring in the future.

The tsunami catastrophe confirmed a trend that was already evident before. Over the past 10 years, the number of people killed by natural disasters has increased by almost fifty per cent from the previous decade. The loss of human life has been matched by a rise in the loss of livelihoods and a huge cost to development.

But at the same time, we have learnt a great deal about what works to reduce the impacts of disaster -- in terms of preparedness before it strikes, and mitigation once it does. We have learnt about the value of investing in changed behaviour.

Friends,

The world looks to this conference

- to help make communities and nations more resilient in the face of natural disasters;
- to mobilize resources and empower populations;
- and finally, to galvanize global action and build on our experience.

The United Nations family will spare no effort in working to make the thinking and the findings of this conference a reality.

I thank every one of you for your commitment, and wish you a most productive session.