

# UNDP Launch of Global Report: “Reducing Disaster Risk: A Challenge for Development”

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Dear colleagues and participants in this launching event,

It is with great pleasure that I am joining Georg in the launching of the **UNDP Global Report on Reducing Disaster Risk: A Challenge for Development**. For the ISDR Inter-Agency Secretariat it is indeed a great privilege to be associated with this valuable publication.

UN/ISDR, as a global coordinating body for the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, attaches great importance to the UNDP report, which furthers the understanding of the interdependence between reducing risk and ensuring a sustainable development.

As already mentioned by Georg, the ISDR Secretariat considers the UNDP Global Report as a sister report of its Global Review of disaster reduction initiatives, **Living with Risk**, launched in 2002.

While the ISDR report was the first comprehensive effort by the UN system to take stock of disaster reduction initiatives throughout the world, analysing disaster trends, assessing policies aimed at mitigating the impact of disasters, and offering examples of successful stories in disaster reduction, the present UNDP report provides the first in-depth focus on the causes of vulnerability, their interdependence with development processes and the urgent need to address risk and vulnerability reduction if we are to attain the Millennium Development Goals, the objectives of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation for sustainable development and those of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction.

Natural disaster prevention and mitigation ranks among the top twenty most important and urgent global issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As J.F. Rischard from the World Bank says, “the issue has taken on such proportions and brings so much suffering that global disaster prevention and mitigation measures seem to be a must.... These disasters have grown so in scope and frequency that they imply responsibilities for the global community.”

Reducing risk and vulnerability is a crosscutting issue with shared responsibility among public and private sectors and individuals themselves, and it is an essential component of sustainable development at all levels, be it global, national or local.

The UNDP’s Global Report on reducing disaster risk, being launched today, is a substantive contribution to the implementation of the ISDR and it further addresses a number of pressing issues of global concerns, helping us to understand:

- Why development is at risk,
- How development factors and underlying processes configuring disaster risks, and
- Why and how development planning and process should integrate disaster risk reduction.

This is crucial for the integration of disaster risk reduction into development policies, programmes and projects.

One of the main shortcomings in the field of disaster reduction is precisely the lack of sufficient and convincing data on the impact of natural hazards in societies and their economies.

This report makes a substantive contribution to understanding the need for such data and to enhancing risk management. It aims at motivating Governments in vulnerable countries, and the global community, to invest in vulnerability reduction. It is not an attempt at ranking countries in 'most to less' at risk or compare among them.

In the coming months, as we prepare for the upcoming World Conference on Disaster Reduction (Kobe-Hyogo, 18-22 January 2005), we will develop, jointly with UNDP, a global reporting mechanism to be proposed to the Conference for adoption by governments and other interested institutions with a view to guiding the implementation of the ISDR in line with the Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation for sustainable development.

Vulnerability is increasing rapidly and we must reduce the risk and prepare better for natural and technological hazards, they are certainly a major threat to development; but they are also an opportunity to build stronger and more resilient communities and prepare them better to face various sustainable development challenges.

The UNDP Report offers concrete steps to bring disaster risk reduction and development concerns closer together and emphasizes that appropriate governance is fundamental if risk considerations are to be factored into development planning, and if existing risks are to be successfully mitigated.

UNDP and UN/ISDR will continue to work together to further improve the framework of risk reduction and provide better cooperation to Governments, technical institutions and non-governmental and community-based organizations. Also involving gradually our other partners of the UN system and international and regional organizations.

As an example, in Africa, UNDP and UN/ISDR are working in close partnership in a number of issues, which include national capacity building in 10 selected countries and the development of guides on why and how to link disaster risk reduction with governance and poverty reduction, among other development sectors.

However, we are fully aware that mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in development planning and process is an uphill challenge, and we cannot achieve it without the support of national governments, and the comprehension and increased awareness of the public.

I therefore would like to conclude my message by congratulating UNDP for this valuable contribution to the subject, in particular, the team behind it, and also inviting you all, Ladies and Gentlemen, to join us in advocating for disaster risk reduction as a development issue, which needs closer attention, and higher priority by governments as well as other institutions involved in development activities.

Thank you.

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