



**STATEMENT AT THE CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION  
UNESCO, International Bureau of Education (IBE)  
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Latest figures from the Centre for Research on Epidemiology of Disasters (University of Louvain, Belgium) show that 255 million people were affected by natural disasters in 2003, which represents a 180% increase from the 90 million that were affected in 1990.

In many disasters, schools are greatly affected. New initiatives by some Governments, the UN, OECD and NGOs, are being undertaken to make school safety a priority target for prevention and mitigation measures and policies in the field of disaster reduction.

The UN General Assembly convened the 2nd World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR, Kobe, Japan, 18-22 January 2005) which will address these priorities and chart the way to follow for the next ten years in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the objectives of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation for Sustainable Development.

The Conference will also be the first UN Conference held within the International Decade on Education for Sustainable Development and we hope this will mobilize the attention of the education sector towards the urgent need to reduce risk and vulnerability to natural hazards.

We are working with UNESCO to make school safety and the integration of disaster reduction in educational programmes, a key topic at the WCDR in Kobe and make it a top priority for Ministries of Education and other relevant ministries in disaster-prone countries. We look forward to your support on this endeavour.

Given the increasing vulnerability to natural hazards due to poverty, un-planned urban growth, environmental degradation and climate change, it is imperative that the educational sector pays a special attention to reversing this trend.

At the UN Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR), we are at your disposal for any further information and support you may need on this important subject.

I take the opportunity to inform that the annual campaign on Disaster Reduction coordinated by the ISDR Secretariat, focuses this year on education with the theme: "Learning from today's disasters for tomorrow's hazards, living with the risk that the hazards pose" which includes an international art contest for young people aged 16 and under around the world. More information is made available at the back of the room and in [www.unisdr.org](http://www.unisdr.org).

Thank you.