



**United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice
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**Statement by the Inter-Agency Secretariat for the
International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR)**

by Salvano Briceno, Director

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to contribute to this discussion. As this is not the first time that the ISDR Secretariat addresses this group, I hope that you are all familiar by now with the concept and set-up of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR). Let me remind you simply that the ISDR was established by the UN General Assembly in the year 2000 and builds on the experience of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) which ran from 1990 to 1999.

You will also recall that the ISDR was established as the centrepiece of the United Nations efforts to address the causes of disasters, which continue to devastate and impede the development of many countries. It consists of the Inter-Agency Task Force mechanism that meets twice a year and has a number of Working Groups and the ISDR Secretariat, part of the UN Secretariat based in Geneva.

I would also like to remind you that the World Summit on Sustainable Development provided a timely reminder to the international community that faulty development and inappropriate use of resources are factors that

contribute to disasters, calling on government to implement the ISDR as an integral part of their sustainable development strategies and plans of action.

Mr Chair,

It is relevant to note, that progress in implementing the ISDR is set against the backdrop of increased losses from natural hazards. We all have in mind the recent events in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, where thousands of tragic casualties from flooding occurred, underlining the extreme vulnerability of developing countries.

In his report to the General Assembly of the United Nations (A/58/277), the Secretary-General noted a very serious concern in the substantial increase in the impact of weather related disasters over the past three decades. The consensus view of the disaster risk reduction professionals indicates that it is predominantly the vulnerability of societies to hazards that is the cause of this increase. It is widely recognized that that many countries are rapidly accumulating large latent risk burdens through growing populations in hazardous situations, poor environmental management and the creation of new social and economic vulnerabilities.

At the same time disaster reduction, and a number of activities carried out within the framework of the ISDR, remain highly relevant to climate change and the work of this body for several important reasons. Firstly, the existing trends evident in weather parameters, though quite small, may already be exacerbating the impacts of some hazard events, especially where social and environmental stresses are already high. And of course the IPCC has

consistently projected the likelihood of increased frequency and intensity of hazards in the future, calling for precautionary preparations, and therefore the reinforcement of disaster risk reduction strategies.

In addition, the experience of countries in managing current climate fluctuations and extremes can provide valuable lessons for dealing with projected longer term changes and disaster reduction therefore provides a solid, meaningful, no-regrets set of activities in support of climate change adaptation plans.

To this address and of relevance to the work of this body, the ISDR Secretariat, along with partners, is working to promote the use of disaster reduction as a primary and readily implemented component of climate adaptation strategies.

These activities include some initial scoping work, carried out with the support of UK/DFID in the context of the World Bank's, Vulnerability, Adaptation and Resource Group (VARG). The initiative is developing a consultative policy paper to provide recommendations in support of the mainstreaming of climate risk reduction into development practices and to facilitate the more systematic sharing of the experience gained in the context of disaster risk management and adaptation to climate change. This paper is seen as a contribution to the paper on Poverty and Climate Change that is already available.

As a contribution to this process, the Inter Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction (IATF/DR) has established a Working Group led by the United

Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). In addition, the scoping phase of this work included commitments and interest from a number of regional partners, who will be invited to contribute to this consultative process. The modalities of these consultations are currently being identified.

Finally, Mr. Chair,

The ISDR has contributed in various ways in the recent past to the work of the IPCC, as well as supporting the participation of disaster risk reduction experts to the LEG,s NAPAs workshops for example and we believe that a number of our ongoing activities can contribute to this bodies activities and its agenda items on Adaptation and Mitigation, particularly aspects relating to Impacts, Vulnerability and Adaptation.

As the implementation of the ISDR is carried out by a number of actors that cover a broad scope of subjects, I cannot list all relevant activities her. I will refer to a few specific activities and areas of work and invite further dialogue to identify the most relevant one.

For example, you may want to take note of the work carried out in support of the effective implementation of early warning systems to natural hazards, and in this context the ISDR Secretariat has recently strengthened its capacities to support our partners work, through the establishment of an ISDR Office in Bonn.

The ISDR Secretariat is also engaged with partners since 2001 in a systematic collection of information on policy, institutional capacities, existing technical, capacity building, networking and awareness raising activities to reduce disaster risk around the world and documentation about accomplishments in many related sectors. This accumulated experience has been compiled in a global review of disaster reduction initiatives adoption by governments of the Yokohama Strategy and plan of Action in 1994. The findings of this review are currently being published in its expanded and updated 2004 version entitled Living with Risk – A global review of disaster reduction initiatives.

Other areas where the ISDR Secretariat's work would be relevant to this body's activities relate to:

- the identification, assessment and monitoring of risk and vulnerability;
- community based disaster risk management and local coping strategies;
- as well as the relevance of natural resource and environmental management and risk reduction.

Given the growing interaction between this group's work and the disaster risk reduction community, the ISDR is looking forward to a strong participation of the climate change communities in the upcoming World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) in 2005. This is seen as a milestone event to increase commitment towards societies resilience to the impacts of natural hazards, and extreme weather events, and in particular

would like to invite the UNFCC Secretariat to consider its participation as appropriate.

Thank you for your attention.