

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY
FOR DISASTER REDUCTION
13 October 2004**

The theme of the International Day for Disaster Reduction, “Learning from today’s disasters for tomorrow’s hazards”, reminds us that the task of learning from disasters concerns every one of us.

In the aftermath of a disaster, government authorities, businesses, community groups and individuals should all ask whether appropriate actions, such as early warning, were taken to save life and property. All should resolve not to repeat the mistakes of the past. All should work together to improve the chain of information and decision-making, so that their communities are better prepared should hazards strike again.

Young people should also be encouraged to learn these lessons – in school, at university, and through community networks. By participating in educational activities, engaging in community risk mapping exercises, and sharing good practices, young people can learn lifelong lessons, and help make their communities more disaster resilient.

At the global level, there is a lot of learning to do as well. The World Conference on Disaster Reduction, to be held in January next year in Kobe, Japan, will give decision-makers and experts a unique chance to take stock of what has been learned from our direct experience with disasters over the past decade, and to provide clear guidelines for implementing those lessons.

Earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, volcanic eruptions and other natural disasters are an inevitable part of life. Our degree of vulnerability to them need not be. As we saw during the recent hurricane season in the Caribbean, the more prepared communities are, the less likely they are to suffer catastrophe. After disaster strikes, the first task of local responders and their international supporters is to bring immediate relief to the victims. But all involved must also be sure to learn from what happened, and act to prepare communities to be more resilient and reduce the risks for the future. On this International Day for Disaster Reduction, let us rededicate ourselves to that mission.