

Press release

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UN SECRETARY-GENERAL CALLS FOR MASSIVE INVESTMENT IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

14 March 2015, SENDAI – The UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, today opened the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, stating that annual economic losses now exceed US\$ 300 billion annually.

“We can watch that number grow as more people suffer. Or we can dramatically lower that figure and invest the savings in development. Six billion dollars allocated each year can result in savings of up to US\$360 billion by 2030, the Secretary-General said.

He said he had met earlier in the day with Vanuatu President, Baldwin Lonsdale, and extended his condolences to the people of Vanuatu amidst fears that Cyclone Pam may have caused widespread damage and destruction over the weekend.

The Secretary-General told the 4,000 participants – including representatives of 186 governments - attending the opening day of the five day event: “You have made this the highest-level meeting on disaster risk reduction in history. This is the first stop on our journey to a new future. Disaster risk reduction advances progress on sustainable development and climate change.”

He praised the existing global agreement on disaster risk reduction, the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), which was adopted ten years ago in Kobe, Japan. He said it “has saved thousands of lives. Now we must respond to the world’s growing needs by empowering individuals, supporting communities and backing promises with resources.”

Work is continuing at the Conference to agree on a new framework for disaster risk reduction which will update the HFA.

Mr. Ban Ki-Moon said: “Our thoughts are with all disaster victims. Our best possible tribute will be to make this Conference a success.”

About UNISDR: UNISDR is the UN office dedicated to disaster risk reduction. It is led by the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction and supports implementation of the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters* which seeks “the substantial reduction of disaster losses, in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries.”

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