



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
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Organisation
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Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Message from Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO,

on the occasion of the International Day for Disaster Reduction 2010

13 October 2010

Risks from natural hazards are relentless. The catastrophic earthquakes in Haiti and Chile, the massive floods in Pakistan and the wildfires across several countries have resulted in large-scale calamities and reminded the world of our vulnerability to natural disasters. The poor continue to pay the highest toll. Poorly planned development and urbanization, alteration of the natural environment, substandard dwellings and public buildings, inadequate infrastructure maintenance and grinding poverty in many communities all exacerbate the effects of natural disaster.

Yet disaster is not the necessary consequence of extreme phenomena. Today there is greater scientific understanding and technological know-how to anticipate the effects of a disaster before it strikes. Natural hazards are among the most manageable of global environmental challenges: the risks are most readily identified; effective mitigation measures are available; and the benefits of vulnerability reduction greatly outweigh the cost. The international community is quick to respond to the needs of victims of natural disasters. What is also required is to promote a culture of disaster reduction, placing the emphasis on pre-disaster action rather than contenting ourselves with post-disaster reaction.

Disaster-risk reduction is a crucial part of UNESCO's mission. The Organization strives for better understanding and improved mitigation of the effects of natural hazards. While actively concerned with the immediate post-disaster needs of recently affected populations in Haiti and Pakistan, UNESCO is engaged in efforts to enhance the scientific and technical capacities of competent institutions in these countries to cope with the risk of similar occurrences in the future. The partners of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction have launched a new campaign entitled Making Cities Resilient. It addresses issues of local governance and urban

risk while drawing upon previous campaigns on safer schools and hospitals, as well as on the principles of sustainable urbanization. We must help local governments to develop and implement safety measures before disaster strikes. UNESCO will participate in this campaign through its various multidisciplinary programmes, and it is my hope that city authorities everywhere will rally to the urgent cause of making their cities resilient.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Irina Bokova". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Irina" and last name "Bokova" clearly distinguishable.

Irina Bokova