

WARNING ON "FORGOTTEN" SEISMIC THREATS

For two consecutive years, major earthquakes have claimed thousands of lives and affected millions in both 2010 and 2011, according to new statistics published by CRED. UNISDR Chief, Margareta Wahlström, said: "The Great East Japan Earthquake and the accompanying tsunami is a reminder to us all that we cannot afford to ignore the lessons of history no matter how forgotten. In 2010 we saw this phenomenon as well when over 220,000 people died in Haiti which had not been hit by an earthquake of such strength for almost 200 years. Unless we prepare for the worst then many earthquake-prone urban areas around the world are destined to see even greater loss of life in the future as more and more people move to cities."

For more information, visit: <http://goo.gl/IRB1M>



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DRR PRIORITY IN 2012 FOR UN LEADERS

UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, in a recent interview, highlighted the prevention of disasters and making the world safer among his "five generational priorities" for his second term. Mr. Ban also identified promoting sustainable development; helping countries and peoples in transition; and encouraging gender empowerment. "We have to connect the dots [between] climate change, [the] food crisis, water scarcity, energy shortages and women's empowerment as well as global health issues. These are all interconnected issues." Mr. Ban said solutions lie with harnessing "the strong power of partnerships" to respond to the planet's biggest challenges, such as tackling climate change, combating poverty and empowering women and girls. Disaster preparedness is also a key priority in 2012 for Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the 66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. Al-Nasser said that in 2011, the Great East Japan Earthquake, floods in Southeast Asia, and the crisis in the Horn of Africa, had tasked the international community to intensify efforts to improve disaster preparedness.

For more information, visit: <http://goo.gl/ziWyl>

US SUMMIT ON RESILIENCE

Some of the biggest names in the U.S. private and public sectors gathered in New York for a Pace University Summit on Resilience in January to see how best partnerships between these two sectors could be developed to strengthen resilience in cities and communities in light of increasing hazards and economic losses. Delivering the opening address, UN Disaster Reduction Chief, Margareta Wahlström said, "Your presence today is a strong message that progress has been made. Can we now accelerate progress and achieve a significant drop in losses within the coming ten years?"

The Summit entitled 'Securing our future through public-private partnerships', was attended by 300 participants representing the public and private sectors, small businesses, the US law enforcement, security and health sectors, as well as the academic world. They included Verizon Communications, Ridge Global Inc., the Boeing Company, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Target, Southern California Edison, the City of Los Angeles Emergency Management, the New York City Office of Emergency Management and the Florida Division of Emergency Management.

Pace President, Stephen J. Friedman said: "After a disaster event, when the first responders depart, the third stage, rebuilding, tends to be a kind of a black hole. The resources and talent are in the private sector while the authority is with the public sector. What's required is real partnership with areas of responsibility defined, accepted and understood in advance". For more information, visit: <http://goo.gl/fXDYH>



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EVIDENCE

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CRED: FAMINE DEATH TOLL GOES UNCOUNTED

Speaking at the UNISDR press briefing on 2011 disaster trends, CRED Director, Prof. Debbie Guha-Sapir, said: "Droughts and famines are rarely spectacular events, but they end up causing massive deaths which go uncounted. As droughts are set to rise in Sub-Saharan Africa, they will continue to devastate large populations.

"In this context, reliable statistics and data should be a priority for better and more timely preventive action." 63 million people, mainly in China and the Horn of Africa, were affected by drought last year. Given the importance of good data for policy, CRED underlines the critical importance of a stronger global approach to disaster data collection for more effective policy development."



Margareta Wahlström delivers opening address at Pace University's Summit on Resilience (see p.4)

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2011: RECORD YEAR FOR ECONOMIC LOSSES

Disasters in 2011 set a new record of \$366 billion for economic losses including \$210 billion as a result of the March tsunami/earthquake in Japan and \$40 billion as a result of the floods in Thailand. 206 million people were affected by 302 human-impact disasters including, for the second year running, 106 million by floods. 63 million were affected by drought and 34 million by tropical storms. There were 29,782 deaths linked to 302 major disaster events including 19,846 deaths in the March tsunami/earthquake in Japan. For more information on the 2011 disaster statistics, visit: <http://goo.gl/IRB1M>

The CRED (Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters) statistics underline the findings of UNISDR's Global Assessment Report 2011 (GAR11) that mortality risk associated with major weather-related hazards is in decline globally and remains concentrated in countries with low GDP and weak risk governance capacities. The CRED disaster figures presented in Geneva at a UNISDR-hosted press conference, also support the GAR11 finding that there has been a rapid increase in the exposure of economic assets to physical hazards and that "the risk of losing wealth in a disaster is now increasing at a faster rate than the wealth is being created...economic strength has failed to translate into lower economic loss risk, even in OECD countries." For more information on GAR11, visit: <http://goo.gl/QrEko>

URBAN VIDEO CHAMPIONS

UNISDR's "Making Cities Resilient Campaign" now has over 900 members and is inspiring local government representatives around the world. Watch some of their interviews:

India: <http://goo.gl/9uCBT>
Italy: <http://goo.gl/7lxRW>
Lebanon: <http://goo.gl/afX69>
Sweden: <http://goo.gl/Lu5MY>

DISASTROUS YEAR FOR THE PHILIPPINES

December's Tropical Storm Sendong or Washi, turned out to be the second deadliest disaster of 2011 causing 1,430 deaths in the Philippines which, with 33 disasters, topped the CRED country list for the highest number of disasters last year.

Philippines Senator, Loren Legarda, UNISDR Disaster Risk Reduction Champion for Asia, said: "We have to take note that the high number of casualties caused by Typhoon Sendong could be due to lack of awareness of the risk and proper action of residents in affected areas, as they have not experienced floods of such magnitude in the past. Thus, information dissemination and community disaster preparedness is also a crucial part in this effort, because an educated populace would be prepared and know what to do in times of disaster."

Media reports in the Philippines said that the disaster was modeled in 2009 in an exercise which showed the vulnerability of the affected coastal cities of Cagayan de Oro and Iligan on the island of Mindanao.

For more information, visit: <http://goo.gl/YvQ5h>

"CHRONIC AMNESIA" - PAKISTAN FLOODS

A major review of the 2010 and 2011 Pakistani floods is calling on donors to be more generous in their support for disaster preparedness and early recovery, and to help Pakistani NGOs to play a bigger role in crisis response. The Humanitarian Response Index (HRI) has called for the strengthening of the capacity of NGOs as well as that of provincial and district state agencies as vital steps if future responses are to be more demand-driven and accountable. HRI 2011 field research - *Focus on Pakistan* - also states that many key recommendations in previous HRI assessments of responses to disasters in Pakistan remain unheeded. According to the Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation (IA-RTE) which is carried out by the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP), "Pakistani humanitarian actors continue to suffer from 'chronic amnesia' by not taking stock of lessons learned from previous evaluations".

For more information, visit: <http://goo.gl/Pzksc>

PHILIPPINES AND CHILDREN'S CHARTER

In the post-disaster phase of Tropical Storm Sendong, attention focused quickly on the needs of 14,000 children who made up about a third of displaced persons in evacuation centers, including those separated from their families. UNICEF has pledged to provide as many school-aged children as possible with continued access to safe and secure learning environments in the hardest-hit cities of Cagayan de Oro and Iligan in line with the provisions of the Children's Charter for Disaster Risk Reduction which was launched at last year's UNISDR Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

For more information, visit: <http://goo.gl/UgsrE>



Photo: <http://www.thorlund.ch>

"Parliamentarians are able to create links between people of different agendas. They are also able to bring together actors with local, national, regional or international outlooks," Cambodian MP, Saumura Tioulong (see p.2)



Photo: <http://irevolution.net/>

CRISIS MAPPING

"ICT tools, such as those used by Crisis Mappers, help us understand what is happening on the ground and who's affected following a disaster. The tools combined with user-generated content also provide an insight into vulnerabilities and risks that a community faces pre-disaster," said Margareta Wahlström, the UN's disaster risk reduction chief, welcoming the staging of the 3rd International Conference on Crisis Mapping (ICCM), in Europe for the first time.

Crisis mapping has emerged in the last five years as a dynamic and open way to visualize and report on crisis and disasters. With increasing internet connectivity, mobile phone use, and user-generated content, 'crowd sourcing' is gaining traction by taking advantage of information communication technology (ICT) that allows communities and networks to answer some of the world's most pressing issues.

"Given our ability as a society to generate, manage, and distribute information, the potential for understanding disaster risks from a global to local level is encouraging. In particular, how crowd sourcing can be used for early warning, risk identification, and as a disaster risk management tool." For more information, visit: <http://goo.gl/MH01y>

PARLIAMENTARIANS' ADVISORY GROUP

Members of parliament (MPs) from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Senegal, Uganda and the East African Legislative Assembly came together in Geneva last month to agree on the establishment of a Global Advisory Group for Parliamentarians with UNISDR's Special Adviser for Parliamentarians, Feng Min Kan. Some quotes from members of the group: Saber Hossain Chowdhury, MP for Dhaka, Bangladesh, said: "The link between disaster risk reduction and climate change is being recognized in Bangladesh's official policy and even the budget office." He added that Bangladeshi members of parliament were currently drafting a law to support the new policy. In Uganda, "Around 70 parliamentarians have joined the Parliamentary Forum and nine have formed an executive committee to support the implementation of a newly-approved national policy on DRR," said Alex Bakunda, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in Uganda's lower house.

For more information, visit: <http://goo.gl/hkOKI>

THAILAND'S MOST COSTLY DISASTER

As the Thai capital, Bangkok, recovers from the worst flooding in a century, many are concerned that the \$40 billion disaster – the most costly in the country's history - may be a sign of things to come amid a changing climate.

"In order to mitigate risks associated with the increasing flooding problem, Thai authorities need to continue to invest in flood protection, improved drainage, construction of flood barriers, improved retention areas and prevention," said Annette Dixon, World Bank Country Director for Thailand.

For more information, visit: <http://goo.gl/KI4Cm>