



United Nations – Nations Unies

International Strategy for Disaster Reduction – Stratégie internationale pour la prévention des catastrophes

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International Day for Disaster Reduction turns the tide on water-related disasters

The International Day for Disaster Reduction will be celebrated on Wednesday 8 October at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, with the official opening of the photographic exhibition 'WATER: Floods in Central Europe'.

The exhibition – organised jointly with the Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the United Nations – presents a collection of images taken of the 'millennium flood' of August 2002 as well as previous floods in the Czech Republic, Germany and Slovakia. The event comprises one of numerous activities taking place around the world in line with the 2003 World Disaster Reduction Campaign theme: *Living with risk – Turning the tide on disasters towards sustainable development*.

'This theme reminds us, during the International Year of Freshwater, that the task is not just to preserve water resources to sustain life, but also to reduce the capacity of water to take life away,' said UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in his message for the Day.

'On the International Day for Disaster Reduction, let us remind ourselves that we can and must reduce the number and impact of disasters by building sustainable communities that have the long-term capacity to live with risk.'

Sálvano Briceño, Director of the Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, emphasised the importance of reflecting and drawing on the experiences of past disasters towards reducing risks and vulnerabilities associated with water-related disasters.

'By looking at weather patterns over the past few decades it becomes clear that water-related hazards are on the rise. Often this is due to human activities that increase communities' vulnerability to hazards, such as environmentally unsound practices, population growth, urbanization, and short-term economic visions,' he said.

'By sharing experiences and learning lessons from past disasters such as last year's floods, we can take action to reduce their negative impacts and avoid disastrous consequences in the future.'

The photographic exhibition is open from 1 to 17 October at the Salle des Pas Perdus at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. It is open to all visitors that take a guided tour through the UN European headquarters.

For more information, please contact:

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