



PRESS RELEASE

UN/ISDR 2004/02
22 March 2004

Living with floods

UN guidelines offer decision-makers hope to reduce flood losses

On the occasion of World Water Day, 22 March 2004, the UN will launch the inter-agency effort "Guidelines for reducing flood losses" in Geneva, New York, Bangkok and Harare.

"Guidelines for reducing flood losses" are a result of a series of consultations led by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (US/NOAA), drawing on the experience of various partners, experts and contributors. The guidelines aim at providing decision-makers with a range of options to consider for flood risk reduction, offering a complementary approach to those existing structural and engineering measures designed to reduce flood losses.

"The number of disasters attributed to flooding is clearly on the rise," said Sálvamo Briceño, Director of the ISDR Secretariat. "The increase can be explained by various factors, such as growing urban populations and denser occupancy of flood plains. In addition, climate change, environmental degradation and El Niño are but a few examples of phenomena that are said to further exacerbate this worrying trend."

In many cases the death and destruction resulting from floods can be avoided or dramatically diminished by taking action to reduce people's risk and vulnerability. "Decision-makers have a key role to play in promoting, developing and implementing disaster reduction initiatives aimed at saving lives and property," said Mr. Briceño.

The launch of the publication coincides with the worldwide celebrations of World Water Day on 22 March <www.waterday2004.org>, which in 2004 will specifically focus on water and disasters. To commemorate the Day in Geneva, ISDR Secretariat has organized a roundtable in conjunction with the Geneva Environment Network entitled "Natural disasters: Is climate change responsible?" at which the launch will take place.

Panelists include Tim Radford, Science Editor of The Guardian; Madaleen Helmer, International Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre; David Carson, World Climate Research Program, WMO/ICSU/IOC; Paul Clements-Hunt, Economic and Trade Branch, UNEP; and Richard J.T. Klein, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research.

Natural disasters: Is climate change responsible?

22 March, 09:00-13:00 International Environment House, Room 3

Guidelines for reducing flood losses available on-line at:

<http://www.unisdr.org/eng/library/isdr-publication/flood-guidelines/isdr-publication-floods.htm>

For more information, please contact:

Nicole Rencoret, Awareness and Promotion
Inter-Agency Secretariat of the
International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR)
Tel: +41 22 917 27 77
Email: rencoret@un.org
www.unisdr.org