



PRESS RELEASE

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G8 calls for more effective strategy to reduce disasters worldwide

Hurricane Dennis' deadly race last weekend across Cuba and Haiti is a stark reminder that the hurricane season is now open. "Despite the Cuban population's excellent training, Dennis killed already ten people in Cuba, showing that even when people are prepared, their vulnerability can remain high," says Salvano Briceño, who heads the UN's disaster reduction secretariat.

This comes six months after the international community met in Kobe, Japan, to adopt the Hyogo Framework for Action -- a visionary plan adopted by the World Conference on Disaster Reduction. It was no coincidence that the recent G8 Summit in Gleneagles specifically addressed the future of disaster risk reduction, and undertook to call for greater support for a more effective International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, with strong leadership from the United Nations.

"This is the first time that a G8 summit recognizes the relevance of disaster risk reduction for development programmes and commits itself to build a more effective International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, says Salvano Briceño. The strategy is also essential to achieve the goals for Africa and Climate Change, which were the top priorities of the summit. In the long term, these policies will have a positive effect on people's safety in the face of natural hazards."

In calling for greater support for a more effective International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the leaders of the most industrialized countries have agreed to provide more resources to the poorest countries. The experience of recent years has shown direct links between disasters and poverty: the more vulnerable a population is, the greater is the likelihood that hazard will strike into disaster.

Humans will never be immune from the power of natural phenomena. Whether through the effects of climate change or because of perennial weather, geological, hydrological patterns, we will continue to witness earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, avalanches, land slides, volcanic eruptions, etc. ... Our challenge is to be prepared for those events so as to suffer minimal loss of life and damage to property. Science and technology, modern equipment and highly competent expertise are available; what we need is to build up the resilience of communities through education, preparedness and early warning measures. Next year's third international conference on early warning, in Bonn, Germany, will be a concrete opportunity to improve on that front.

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