

PRESS RELEASE

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Hurricane season

“Preparation is key” says Salvano Briceño from ISDR

As hurricane Emily left Cancun and the Yucatan peninsula, Mexican authorities are now evacuating residents from areas close to the Tamaulipas state near the Texas Border where Emily is expected to hit later today.

“Mexico is a good example of hurricane preparedness. Mexican authorities immediately identified populations at risk and reacted accordingly. They are able to organise large-scale evacuation. They relocated tourists and local inhabitants, evacuated workers from the offshore oil platforms and closed the airports very quickly,” says Salvano Briceño, director of the Secretariat for ISDR.

The Hyogo Framework for Action, approved by the international community this year in Kobe, recognizes political will as a main element in disaster reduction. “If reducing risk is a national and local priority, people are safer because they know what to do,” adds Briceño. “In Cancun, after the issuing of first warning messages, people taped their windows and made their houses safer. Prevention and preparedness are key to saving populations.”

Evacuations in Mexico began Saturday afternoon from islands off the Eastern coast of the Yucatan peninsula. Early warning messages were issued hours before the hurricane was approaching.

“Early warning systems are essential components of risk reduction measures. The Hurricane Centre in Miami provides valuable and timely information but it is up to each Nation and community to integrate risk and vulnerability reduction in their daily lives, including early warning and preparedness programmes “ says Salvano Briceño.

Dennis’s early arrival and Emily’s strong activity show that the 2005 hurricane season will be active. Scientists have predicted a 97 per cent probability of an above normal Atlantic hurricane season for this year and 15 tropical storms for the Atlantic basin with four intense hurricanes.

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Global warming might be contributing to this abnormal activity as sea waters where hurricanes form get warmer. The hurricane season started badly this year and so did the monsoon season. Torrential rains have caused heavy flooding in Northeast India.

Typhoon Haitang already battered Taiwan and China is evacuating more than half a million residents as the typhoon is expected to make landfall later today.

Romania is also suffering the worst floods in 50 years.

“Given the growing vulnerabilities it is urgent to increase caution as well as risk reduction policies and measures. We need to remain alert and prepare for the worst,” concludes Briceño.

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