

## PRESS RELEASE

UN/ISDR 2005/24  
Tuesday 30 August 2005

### Hurricane Katrina

#### **“Industrialized countries have to be prepared for the worst”**

“The strong tropical cyclone in Louisiana and Mississippi, as well as the devastating floods in Romania, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Austria and Germany are yet another reminder that natural hazards are a global threat. We need to pay more attention to social vulnerability to hazards,” says Salvano Briceño, director of the Secretariat for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. “Anyone can be affected, any day, anywhere by disaster originated by a natural hazard. As a tourist or as a traveller, we can be faced by disasters that do not exist in our country. Therefore we have to be constantly prepared and educated for all types of natural disasters.”

Talking in a press briefing today in Geneva, Briceño recalled the importance of preparedness in the face of natural disasters. “Urban risks, the degradation of the environment and global warming make disaster reduction a top priority for all governments’ agenda.”

Calling for more systematic campaigns on disaster prevention, the director of the ISDR underlined a variety of measures that should be taken to reduce the impact of natural hazards. Early warning systems and contingency planning are effective measures as long as people and communities, through regular training and drills, understand them. Land-use planning has to integrate risk assessments and requires wider participation of the public to make them more aware of the risks they face. Disaster preparedness programmes need also to be well established to secure populations when disaster occur.

“People easily forget risks and they often see natural hazards as dangers that only threaten others,” said Salvano Briceño. “Even countries that are well prepared can do better. There is always room for improvement.” Back from the FYR of Macedonia where he met experts on prevention from Romania, Germany and Bulgaria, Salvano Briceño commented on the current floods in Central Europe: “The impact of floods in Romania and Bulgaria are immense. Many rural areas have been completely devastated. The impact of the floods on the Romanian and Bulgarian economies will be enormous and will have long time consequences on the population.”

**For more information, please contact:**

Brigitte Leoni, Media Relations

Inter-agency secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR)

Tel: +41 22 917 4968

Email: [leonib@un.org](mailto:leonib@un.org)

[www.unisdr.org](http://www.unisdr.org)