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Internationally renowned aerial photographer, Yann Arthus Bertrand, joins forces with the ISDR to promote disaster risk reduction

“In 1998, I was flying over flooded Bangladesh. I saw a little girl and her grand-father perching on a reed stem waiting for food and help. When they saw my helicopter they lifted their eyes in hope. I only had my camera, but came back the day after with supplies,” recounted Yann Arthus Bertrand at the launch of the 2006 Disaster Reduction calendar in Geneva today. The calendar includes twelve of Arthus Bertrand’s photos, depicting powerful messages of the impact of disasters on the environment and on populations.

Yann Arthus Bertrand is the first artist to promote disaster risk reduction at the international level. For years, he has photographed the world from the sky, showing the beauty of the Earth. However, he says that “this testimony is worthless if it does not lead to awareness and action.”

Since 2004, Yann Arthus Bertrand has visited the Indian Ocean countries, and the United States to capture the impact of natural hazards on people and their livelihoods. He is now collaborating with the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR) secretariat to promote disaster risk reduction. “Photographing the effects of disasters and damaged sites enables me to raise public awareness” says Yann Arthus Bertrand.

“His pictures demonstrate our increasing vulnerability to natural hazards and alert us to the risks we face. Showing the vulnerability of people, cities and ecosystems is essential because it raises awareness of what should be done to reduce the impact of disasters” says Salvano Briceño, director of the ISDR secretariat.

Yann Arthus Bertrand’s passion for safeguarding the planet has made him an advocate for government action on disaster reduction. “Governments must act quickly. Sustainable development makes common sense. This is not an ideological debate but a question of political commitment. It is the way of the future,” says Yann Arthus Bertrand.

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

www.unisdr.org