

PRESS RELEASE

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“Governments must accelerate their efforts to make disaster risk reduction a national priority”

A year ago, in Kobe Hyogo Japan, 168 governments signed the Hyogo Framework, a plan of action to reduce the impact of natural hazards on populations over the next decade. Since its adoption, 40 countries have revised their policies to put disaster risk reduction at the top of their political and development agendas.

“These are very positive steps forward but governments must accelerate their efforts. We cannot reduce the impact of natural hazards if policies and legislation are not in place” says Salvano Briceño, director of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction’s Secretariat.

Many countries are developing new strategies and enacting new laws to make disaster risk reduction a national priority. India and Sri Lanka have just adopted a legislative framework to integrate disaster risk reduction in their national policies. Peru and Panama have just put in place a national disaster platform. The African Union recently established a common regional strategy to integrate disaster risk reduction in their policies. These efforts are encouraging but “environmental degradation, rapid urbanization, global warming and the lack of institutional capacities are making millions of people more vulnerable to natural hazards. And the next natural hazard is just a matter of time” adds Salvano Briceño.

The Hyogo Framework calls on governments to invest in measures such as national and local risk assessments, early warning systems, public awareness and education, better urban planning and safer building construction codes. “We already possess the knowledge needed to make the world safer and better prepared for natural hazards. When countries are prepared in the face of natural hazards, lives are spared and economic and environmental damage is reduced.”

“The current drought in Kenya and Ethiopia is a tragic yet preventable example of a natural hazard that has turned into a serious food crisis with some 11 million people across region in desperate need of food aid. This is yet another situation where governments, international organizations and civil society should join efforts under one common strategy rather than engage in scattered initiatives,” says Salvano Briceño.

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