

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **“The world needs to draw the lessons of Hurricane Katrina”**

As the Hurricane Ernesto is approaching the US Gulf coast, it is important to recall how preparedness is key to save people. The arrival of Hurricane Ernesto coincides with the one year-anniversary of Hurricane Katrina that killed more than a thousand people in New Orleans partly because of a lack of preparedness and emergency transport measures.

More than three billion people, or almost half of the world population live in coastal areas and could face future threats of hurricanes, storms or floods due to climate changes and level sea rising.

The massive evacuations undertaken yesterday in Cuba and today in Florida, USA are important measures that can save lives and reduce the impact of disasters.

“People should not ignore these measures and need to evacuate when they are told. It is a matter of personal safety. In New Orleans, a lot of people died because they refused to evacuate, it is true that many of them feared looting but a lot of them thought they would be spared by the disaster “ says Salvano Briceño, Director of the UN/ISDR secretariat. “ If we want to reduce the impact of disasters, we need to instill a culture of prevention and ensure that warnings are credible. ”

Hydro-meteorological hazards affect millions of people every year.

The damage caused by the Hurricane Katrina was predicted by experts years ago. Solutions to strengthen levees, revise the evacuation plans and transport schemes had been proposed but ignored.

“We know more than we ever did about the dangers we face, our greatest threat is rarely the hurricane, the storm or the quake; it is ourselves. We tend to ignore the lessons drawn from past disasters and repeat the same mistakes, rebuilding exactly where and how it was built before. The world needs to learn from the lessons of Hurricane Katrina and to invest much more in disaster risk reduction before a disaster strikes. It will not only save lives but huge amounts of money. ”

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According to the Re Insurance Company, Munich Re, Hurricane Katrina incurred some US\$ 45 billion insured losses and was the costliest natural hazard ever recorded.

Since the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan, the ISDR secretariat and its partners have been promoting an initiative encouraging donors and governments to dedicate at least 10 per cent of humanitarian aid towards prevention measures in order to avoid repeating the same mistakes.

To date, The United Kingdom has been the only country to implement such a policy.