



United Nations
International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
Secretariat, Geneva

For more information
please contact:

Brigitte Leoni
Media Relations
Tel: +41 22 917 8897
leonib@un.org
www.unisdr.org

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Floods in Asia and heat waves in Central and South Europe “We cannot wait to be taken by surprise » said Sálvano Briceño

“Heavy rainfalls in Pakistan, India and the Northern England and heat waves in Greece, Italy and Romania are indications of what might happen more frequently and more severely across the globe as a consequence of the global warming”, said Sálvano Briceño, director of the UN International strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat. Recent reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predict increased rainfalls and higher temperatures as evidence of climate change.

“We are not trying to scare people but we want to alert every government of the urgency to put disaster risk reduction as a top priority of their political agenda as no country will be immune,” said Sálvano Briceño

The ISDR secretariat which is the United Nation’s body that advocates for disaster risk reduction policies is urging governments to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action. The framework recommends a set of concrete measures and policies to reduce the impacts of disasters and increase the resilient of nations against natural hazards by 2015 and was endorsed by 168 governments at a global conference in Japan in 2005

A large number of the world’s disasters are climate related. “We cannot wait to be taken by surprise, we know what is going to happen and we can prepare for it” said Sálvano Briceño

Adaptation to climate change means, for example, setting up early warning systems that can alert people on time, building flood shelters and having contingency plans in place to be able to evacuate hundreds of people rapidly, protecting houses and critical infrastructures such as hospitals, schools, water supplies, electricity installations and transport systems.

People in Southern India and Pakistan are struggling to cope with the effects of three days of heavy rains that have killed more than 200 people. In Northern England, people are trying to recover after heavy precipitation: one month’s worth of rain fell in a couple of hours.

Many of the most effective tools to reduce the impact of disasters are simply about educating and raising awareness of people, not expensive technology, to save lives.

In Romania more people are reported to have died because of the heat waves despite the knowledge acquired in 2003 after the high temperatures that affected most of Europe.

“We can no longer afford to ignore growing and compelling warnings from the world’s leading experts. The situation is not beyond remedy and building resilience and minimizing costs, through adaptation to climate variability and change, is essential to secure the future of societies and economies” said Salvano Briceño.