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PRESS RELEASE

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UN/ISDR secretariat urges governments at Bali Climate Change conference to promote adaptation and disaster risk reduction

The secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR) stressed the importance of including climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction policies in the Bali talks on climate change that will start next Monday.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is convening the 13th session of the Conference of the Parties in Bali, Indonesia from 3 to 14 December, to launch negotiations on the climate change regime after 2012, when the Kyoto Protocol ends.

“Governments agreed to take action on mitigation and adaptation in the UNFCCC, but to date, the negotiations on climate change have focused on mitigation. Adaptation needs to be a main priority for reducing the vulnerability of societies to inevitable climate change impacts “says Salvano Briceño, Director of the UN/ISDR secretariat in Geneva.

“90 per cent of disasters are already weather-related, and more intense and frequent hurricanes and floods are predicted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). We cannot wait. We already have the tools to reduce the impact of climate-related hazards and we need to use them now” says Briceño, who is urging governments to use the clear guidance of the Hyogo Framework for Action on disaster risk reduction to reduce climate change risks and impacts.

“On this particular issue, there is no need to create another framework. We have the Hyogo Framework,” says Briceño, The Hyogo Framework for Action adopted by 168 governments in Hyogo, Japan in 2005 is a tool that offers practical and efficient measures to reduce the impact of disasters, including extreme climate events. These measures include, for example:

- Avoiding building houses in flood plains or close to coastal areas
- Building on higher ground with resilient material able to sustain the force of winds and water pressure. Protecting critical infrastructures such as schools, hospitals and roads.
- Changing agriculture patterns, e.g. planting bananas at different time of the year to avoid the hurricane season as is done now in Cuba
- Having early warning systems in place and shelters to evacuate people on time and save their lives.

Educating children, elderly and disabled persons about how to protect their livelihoods from the risks of cyclones, floods and sea level rise.

Empowering women at all levels for disaster risk reduction.

Setting up simulation exercises and drills to train people about what to do when disasters happens

“As well as incorporating disaster risk reduction into the post-Kyoto discussions, we encourage Governments who signed the Hyogo Framework in the tragic wake of the Indian Ocean Tsunami to refresh their commitment, take immediate action, and implement the Framework now.”

The UN/ISDR Director also urged governments to start sourcing adequate funds for adaptation, as many vulnerable countries will be unable to pay for adaptation out of their own budgets. The UNFCCC estimates that the cost of adaptation in 2030 will be USD 50-170 billion in total, and USD 28-67 billion for developing countries. The ISDR system has began a study of the costs and benefits of specific risk reduction measures, which will be useful for identifying cost-effective adaptation to extreme climatic events.