

**Remarks of Senator Loren Legarda**  
**Public Launch of World Disasters Report 2009**  
Geneva, 17 June 2009

IFRC Secretary General Bekele Geleta,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to take part in today's public launch of the World Disaster Report of 2009. I am grateful to the IFRC for the invitation to join this event.

The World Disaster Report is among the most important and relevant publications the disaster risk management community looks forward to every year. The focus of this year's report on early warning and early action is most relevant and responsive to the realities on the ground, and as such it deserves priority for global action.

Disaster risk has been on the rise – a reality that prevails and constantly challenges us. The growing population in areas prone to natural hazards has exposed billions of people to disaster risks. The impact of disasters could linger for years, put our development gains in great peril, and make our shared goals for sustainable human development even more elusive. And yet, given the grim scenario of climate change impacts, more disaster are bound to happen if we do not act decisively to reduce the risks.

We therefore need to make disaster risk reduction our first line of defense and our primary strategy for adapting to climate change. For in building our resilience to disasters today, we build as well our resilience to climate change in the future. Development that is pursued along with climate change adaptation through risk reduction measures can look forward to, not only economic gains, but a much safer environment for people to live in.

We need to allocate more resources in reducing people's vulnerability to disaster and climate change impacts. For investing in disaster risk reduction measures not only prevents socio-economic losses, but also protects our people.

Reducing disaster risks is a matter of high importance to the world now, especially to developing countries where disaster risks abound, and to the poor and the marginalized who are most affected by disasters.

The present task of reducing disaster risks in the context of a changing global climate has become synonymous to securing humanity and the future of our children and our grandchildren today. And, this task requires a new breed of leaders at the national and local community levels.

In reducing disaster risks and adapting to climate change, early warning and early action are at the very heart of our efforts. Experiences in various countries show that effective early warning systems can reduce the impact of extreme events. But more importantly, the Report highlights the importance of reducing vulnerability over the longer term in order for communities to better cope with climate variability and uncertainty and sustain their development gains.

Vulnerabilities to disaster risks are magnified by climate change. Climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction therefore demand the commitment of all stakeholders. To recognize the importance of early warnings and early actions and to integrate them into national and local action plans are a moral imperative for the good of the people as well as the environment we live in. It is everybody's responsibility to help make our communities be more resilient to natural hazards.

Our early warning system must be able to integrate risk knowledge, monitoring and warning service, risk communication and warning dissemination, and the response capacity of the community.

Our early warning system must be able to transcend its purpose for humanitarian response toward socio-economic development of the community. It must be appreciated not only as a means for protecting and preserving human lives, but also socio-economic gains and opportunities.

Our early warning system must facilitate early actions and link them into long-term development aims towards effective disaster risk reduction.

As countries and communities, we must learn from the experiences and shared lessons of the IFRC. It does not only exemplify excellence in disaster preparedness and response but also proficiency in proactive disaster risk management.

Thank you.