



# International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

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Reduction*

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## **Mission**

*The ISDR aims at building disaster resilient communities by promoting increased awareness of the importance of disaster reduction as an integral component of sustainable development, with the goal of reducing human, social, economic and environmental losses due to natural hazards and related technological and environmental disasters.*

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Distinguished Excellencies, participants, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all let me convey my gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan for hosting this Conference and the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre for providing such excellent organizational and logistic support. We believe that regional developments and support will become an increasingly important ingredient to promote more action to embark in application of risk reduction measures and implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

I am pleased to address you today, only two weeks after we held the first session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Geneva, when the momentum is high. 120 Governments and more than 120 international organizations - including UN, regional, non-governmental organizations and experts - got together to reiterate the commitment to reduce risk, launch new initiatives and assess progress and major challenges ahead. Many of you had the opportunity to be there or to contribute to the Global Review through national reports on progress to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action and to build more resilient communities and nations.

My first call to you during this Conference to build on what has been achieved and focus on specific steps to increase the national capacities in the region to coordinate actions in each country to realign policies and practices in each sector to develop multi-hazard and hazard specific risk reduction action. National platforms as well as solid regional coordination will help in this task. And risk reduction is a multistakeholder task- no one can achieve it alone. We call on countries to come forward as champions to demonstrate concrete results that can be shared and used as examples by next Global Platform and review in 2009.

My second call to you is to use this Conference to prepare for the up-coming Ministerial meeting in November, which will be hosted by the Government of India. Awareness and political commitment- at highest level in Government and among decision makers is what in the end will make good intentions turn into well resourced and sustained actions. The only way to achieve the goal of the Hyogo framework for Action *“to substantially reduce disaster losses, in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries”* is to change behaviour – and apply risk assessments and risk reduction tools in development. A “regional platform for Asia” in sharing lessons, learning from each other and monitor progress- or lack of progress- and harvest opportunities. Using existing regional and sub-regional mechanisms to do this must be the way forward. The ISDR secretariat stands ready to support these efforts together with all the regional and international partners in the “ISDR system”

We need to sustain and improve preparedness for effective response and early warning capacities- to reach the communities. But we ALSO need to be much more conscious and proactive in engaging with environmental agencies to work on ecosystem management that will increase the absorptions capacity and reduce floods and landslides; infrastructure and transportation to improve how roads and bridges are designed and built (and maintained); ensure that schools and hospitals withstand earthquakes and other hazards to protect people- not to kill. And we need of course to foster knowledge and understanding, and change in behaviour among people in general.

Because we need to focus on the need to change our development practices if we are to achieve the goal of the Hyogo Framework for Action. The way we build and manage our

cities. In how we educate new generations in the root-causes to unsustainable development patterns- and in the understanding on how to address natural hazards.

We have witnessed some achievements and progress in disaster risk reduction all over the world. But participants at the Global Platforms concluded that implementation and action is far too slow. Recognition is growing that disaster risk reduction is the most effective approach to address the challenge posed by natural hazards and also to adapt to climate change. This has resulted in considerable growth in the number of actors at global, regional and sub-regional and country levels engaging in disaster risk reduction. We need to continue working together to maintain the momentum and drive the global movement on disaster risk reduction towards a safer world. I ask you to review the results of the Global Platform – and continue building the capacity to review progress in the region as a tool to promote action and cater for resources, both nationally and internationally.

I wish you a productive and look forward to developing together with you a substantive process, at all levels and in all sectors, for building resilience and a safer future for our populations. My colleagues from the ISDR secretariat who are here in the meeting- from our offices in Bangkok, Dushanbe, Cairo, Teheran and Bonn will be available- both to learn and to help guide the discussions.

Thank you for your attention.