

Video Address
Public Forum
Winning Against Disasters
Sálvano Briceño
Director UN/ISDR

Dear participants of the Public Forum “Winning Against Disasters”. I am pleased to greet you from Geneva. I am sorry that I cannot be here with you today in person to listen your valuable contributions on education, action and development at the community level, which are so crucial to reducing disaster risk. I wish to thank the co-organizers of this forum: the United Nations University, the Cabinet Office of Japan, the ADRC, UNESCO, and the World Bank for all their time, effort and resources in organizing this Forum.

All of us here know that the incidence and impact of disasters are significantly on the rise due to a combination of global warming, rapid urban growth and environmental degradation. These factors are increasing communities’ vulnerability to natural hazards and will keep many developing countries from reaching the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Over all, we are still loosing to disasters. In order to start wining, we must unite forces and combine resources in aiming at the same targets with mutually agreed mechanism and tools.

Nearly two years ago, in Kobe, 168 Governments adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action, global plan to reduce risk and vulnerability to natural hazards over the decade. The Hyogo Framework underlines the urgent need to shift our efforts from disaster response to disaster reduction and it spells out the specific responsibilities of Governments, international and regional organizations on how to do so.

At this point in time, we have all the resources, scientific and technical know-how available to reduce disaster risk in the most vulnerable countries and communities. But we need to work collectively at all levels to better use these resources so that they benefit those who are trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty made more difficult to break by vulnerability to natural hazards.

Governments are responsible for taking the lead in making disaster risk reduction a national priority. But ultimately disaster risk reduction strategies depend on the engagement of all sectors of society. From teachers who educate children, journalists who communicate the news, to private entrepreneurs who can help design and construct buildings that can withstand natural hazards; every individual has an active role to play in reducing his/her own personal risk as well as that of the community. This is the only way that we can win against disasters and protect our lives and livelihoods.

At the ISDR we are working towards facilitating this process by better coordination and pooling of resources at the international level. By engaging a wider range of governmental and non-governmental organizations we are developing a global movement on disaster reduction: a movement of individuals and institutions that

builds on the priorities set out in the Hyogo Framework for Action and works for the communities most vulnerable to natural hazards.

I conclude by encouraging you to join and use this global movement by making disaster risk reduction part of your everyday life and behaviour through being aware, alert and taking actions that will help your family, community and country more resilient to disasters caused by natural hazards.

It is only by working together, we can be sure of winning against disasters.

I look forward to reading the various contributions to be made today and conclusions and recommendations emerging from this public forum.

Thank you.