



PRESS RELEASE



UN OFFICE OF THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES,
LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

United Nations Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe
Discusses Need for Global Early Warning System

United Nations Under-Secretary-General Calls for Urgent Action
to Reduce Disaster Risks in Small Island Developing States

Kobe, Japan, 19 January 2005: The World Conference on Disaster Reduction opened with the goal of reaching agreement on a 10-year global action plan to mitigate the effects of natural disasters through early warning systems, quake-proof buildings, accelerated response units and other measures that can reduce the death toll.

United Nations Under-Secretary-General and the Secretary-General of the recently-concluded Mauritius International Meeting on Small Island Developing States, Anwarul K. Chowdhury, said, “The United Nations Conference in Mauritius reaffirmed that the small island developing States continue to be a special case for sustainable development and it recognized the need to develop and strengthen effective disaster risk reduction, early warning systems, emergency relief, and rehabilitation and reconstruction capacities for these countries.”

Stressing the need to take timely, deliberate, systematic and concerted action to reduce disaster risks, Mr. Chowdhury drew the attention of the international community to the vulnerability of small island developing States. “It is much more difficult for small developing states, many of which are geographically far-flung and isolated, and lack the resources and know-how to effectively deal with such disasters.” He was referring to persistent natural disasters – hurricanes, cyclones, storms, floods and tsunamis.

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In his capacity as High Representative of the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, Mr. Chowdhury said, “Like the SIDS, the 50 Least Developed Countries of the world suffer the worst consequences of disasters and their valiant development efforts experience recurring setbacks. The Brussels Programme of Action for these countries, adopted by the United Nations in 2001, underscores the critical importance of disaster reduction and preparedness for the LDCs.”

“It is necessary that the Kobe outcome gets updated and links up with the ongoing Programme of Action for LDCs, in the same manner that it would reflect the just-adopted Mauritius Strategy for SIDS,” he added.

Mr. Chowdhury welcomed an initiative by the Prime Minister of Japan Junichiro Koizumi to use the Official Development Assistance (ODA) to promote efforts by developing countries to reduce disasters.

Over 4,000 delegates have gathered in Kobe for the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Reduction. Japan has proposed a special session during the conference to discuss a specific framework for an international tsunami warning system and cooperation for educating and raising awareness.

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