

**MESSAGE BY THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR DISASTER  
REDUCTION, OCTOBER 13, 2017**

The focus of this year's International Day for Disaster Reduction is very much on people as we draw attention to the growing numbers exposed to extreme weather events and earthquakes.

Reducing the numbers of people who are affected by disaster is at the heart of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and its seven targets which were adopted two years ago by UN Member States.

Apart from death or serious injury, there is nothing worse in a disaster situation than losing the family home or the ability to earn a living.

But that is the fate that overtakes millions of people every year. In fact today more people are forced from their homes by natural hazards than by conflict.

Some 20 countries have declared drought emergencies in the last 18 months. The Horn of Africa is particularly badly affected.

Millions of people in the mainland USA and across the Caribbean are living with the consequences of a record breaking Atlantic Hurricane Season.

Flooding across Bangladesh, India and Nepal has made normal life impossible for millions.

International Day for Disaster Reduction is about reminding ourselves of the importance of building our resilience to disasters.

Everybody has right to live and work in an environment that does not put their well-being and safety at risk.

Disaster risk reduction is everybody's business and we must spread a greater understanding of that risk in a world where poverty is entrenched, the environment is under attack, urbanization is often unplanned and institutions are lacking in resources to manage disaster risk.

Events which would have resulted in the loss of many lives in the recent past, are no longer so deadly thanks to effective early warning systems, better preparedness, enforcement of building codes and other preventive measures.

The Sendai Seven Campaign, named after the Sendai Framework targets, is now focused on reducing the numbers of people affected by such events.

As the UN Secretary-General has said, it will be impossible to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals if low and middle income countries are constantly recovering from extreme disaster events.

The answer to that problem lies in greater understanding of disaster risk in all its facets, particularly how the drivers of disaster risk are now being amplified by the effects of climate change.

With climate change, the new normal is increasingly severe storms, droughts and floods.

From now on disaster-prone parts of the world have to incorporate climate change in the preparations and plans if we are to break the cycle of recurring misery and destruction of lives and property.

On this day we also celebrate what works well.

The storm shelter that withstood Hurricane Maria on the tiny island of Barbuda. The self-help and community spirit of the people of storm battered Puerto Rico. The farmers in Africa who are turning successfully to more drought-resistant crops. The 7,000 people who attended India's first National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Resilience has many facets.

It comes in all shapes and sizes to suit all climates, geographies and budgets. We need to get better at recognizing the added value that it brings to our lives when we invest in it wisely.

Here at the UN Office for Disaster Reduction we look forward to hearing how the day goes for you.

Thank you.