

Talking Points for UNISDR Director

- Disasters are becoming more frequent, causing more damage and affecting more people than ever before. 190 million people were affected by disasters in 2007, compared to 134 million in 2006. Disaster risk reduction is cheaper than disaster relief, response and recovery: On average, US\$1 spent on disaster risk reduction, can save US\$7 in disaster recovery costs.
- The IPCC predicts that increases in drought, flooding and extreme weather events from climate change will hit developing countries and poor populations the hardest, particularly in Africa and Asia.
- OIC member states are severely affected by disasters. For example, according to statistics from the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), in 2007, over 50 percent of disaster related deaths from the ten most important disasters were in OIC countries, mainly in Bangladesh and Pakistan. Tropical cyclone Gonu resulted in damages in Oman, amounting to 9.6 percent of the country's GDP.
- In January 2005, 168 Governments, of which 40 OIC member states, adopted a 10-year plan to make the world safer from natural hazards at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held in Kobe, Hyogo, Japan. That plan, the Hyogo Framework for Action, is a global blueprint for disaster risk reduction efforts during the next decade.
- Its goal is to substantially reduce disaster losses by 2015 - in lives, and in the social, economic, and environmental assets of communities and countries. The Hyogo Framework offers guiding principles, priorities for action, and practical means for achieving disaster resilience for vulnerable communities.
- UNISDR is the UN interagency Secretariat with the mandate to coordinate, promote and strengthen disaster risk reduction on a global, regional, national and local level. Our work focuses on promoting links and synergies between, and the coordination of, disaster reduction activities in: the socio-economic, humanitarian and development fields, as well as to support policy integration.
- UNISDR gives special attention to Climate Change, which will contribute to an increase in the frequency and intensity of storms, floods and droughts around the world. Indeed, climate change adaptation starts with disaster risk reduction and the Hyogo Framework for Action is a ready tool for adaptation activities.
- The UNISDR Secretariat further supports the ISDR System that is composed of a broad range of partners all of which have essential roles to play in supporting nations and communities to reduce disaster risk. They include governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, UN agencies, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, international financial institutions, scientific and technical bodies and specialized networks as well as civil society and the private sector. The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs (USG) convenes, provides leadership for, and ensures coherence and coordination of the support provided to the ISDR system.
- The ISDR System recognizes the leadership of Governments at all levels for disaster risk reduction at national and local levels, including coordination, advocacy and implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action within their national context and governed by their own existing structures.

- The Hyogo Framework calls on States to designate an appropriate national coordination mechanism for the implementation and follow-up of the Hyogo Framework. At the global level, States are the key stakeholders in the bi-annual Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, which will see the second session take place in June 2009 in Geneva in the presence of the UN Secretary General. Member states are foremost at this forum in contributing to the substantive discussions and formulation of policy and programming priorities for the ISDR System, informed by the Global Assessment Report inter alia.
- The ISDR System's first biennial Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction (GAR) will be launched in May 2009 in Bahrain by the Prime Minister of Bahrain and the UN Secretary-General. Coordinated by the UNISDR Secretariat with key support of UNDP and the World Bank, and in collaboration with other ISDR System partners, the GAR will be a landmark assessment focusing the world's attention on the problem of disaster risk, and will consolidate political and economic support and commitment to disaster risk reduction.
- Following the GAR launch in May, the UNISDR Secretariat plans to organize the second Middle East and North Africa Regional Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. We have also co-organized with the Government of Malaysia the third Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Kuala Lumpur in early December 2008, which was very successful, and we are organizing the 3rd Africa Ministerial Conference with the AU as well as the Latin American and the Caribbean Regional Platform in the first quarter of 2009.
- The ISDR System has also been strengthened by the establishment of a new post created to step up action and international cooperation on disaster risk reduction. Appointed in November 2008 by the UN Secretary-General, Margareta Wahlström becomes Assistant Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Secretary-General's Special Representative for the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in the Secretariat for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR). The creation of the post by the Secretary-General is a watershed moment in the evolution of the disaster risk reduction agenda and the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, and signals a substantive elevation of priority both within the UN System and UN Member States more broadly.
- Currently, UNISDR has regional offices in Cairo, Bangkok, Nairobi, Panama, Suva and Geneva (covering Europe). UNISDR also has sub-regional liaison offices in Tehran, Dushanbe, Addis Ababa, Johannesburg, Bonn, New York and Tokyo.
- UNISDR looks forward to strengthening cooperation with the OIC and its Member States to significantly reduce disaster losses in lives, social, economic, and environmental assets of communities and countries.
- Areas of cooperation could include:
 - first and foremost, advocacy, particularly at the highest levels of governments, to ensure the necessary political will required to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action.
 - In addition, networking to provide a forum for the exchange of expertise and experiences will be another area of focus.
 - Furthermore, joint efforts to build capacities for disaster risk reduction within Member States will be pursued.
 - Finally, cooperation will be sought in the mobilisation of resources for the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.
- Dialogue on areas of cooperation began with the OIC in July 2008 in Geneva at the UN-OIC General Meeting on Cooperation, as well as during my recent visit to Jeddah in November. UNISDR looks forward to working more closely with the OIC in the future.