



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR DISASTER REDUCTION

New York, 12 October 2005

The last few weeks have once again reminded us all of the power of nature to bring great loss, suffering and destruction to the peoples of the world. On Monday, the General Assembly expressed its solidarity with the people of Pakistan and its neighbours India and Afghanistan following the devastating earthquake in that region, and with the people of Central America, following the catastrophic flooding and mudslides which have also resulted in the loss of many lives. And at the 2005 World Summit many leaders offered their sympathy and support to the United States in the wake of the extensive loss of life and widespread destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina.

Over the last year natural disasters have taken a particularly heavy toll. The Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami had a truly catastrophic impact from Indonesia to Somalia. But there have also been a great number of other natural disasters – floods, hurricanes, typhoons, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, droughts, locusts, fires – which have had a big impact on countries and regions in every corner of the globe.

It is hard to prevent most natural hazards. But we can work together to prevent so many of them from becoming natural disasters. This is an area

where the people and governments of individual nations have important responsibilities, but where international action on two fronts is often also required.

First, the world rightly expects quick, effective, well co-ordinated responses to natural disasters. I commend all the organizations, not least the relevant UN bodies, who have played important roles so effectively over the last year. And I look forward to the implementation of the commitments from the 2005 World Summit to further strengthen the UN's ability to provide timely and well co-ordinated help.

Second, international action is needed to reduce the risks and impact of natural hazards before they occur. In January, the World Conference on Disaster Reduction adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, which was reaffirmed at the 2005 World Summit. It is incumbent on all of us to ensure that the Framework is implemented as quickly as possible.

Jan Eliasson