

Video Message



UN Photo 2005 / Eskinder Debebe

President William J. Clinton
Former President of the United States
Former UN Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery

I thank the Japanese government for hosting this International Forum and for its leadership on disaster risk reduction worldwide. It has been two years now since the World Conference on Disaster Reduction was held in Kobe, in this very same conference center. Then the international community agreed on the Hyogo Framework for Action, a ten-year global plan to reduce vulnerabilities to natural hazards.

In my role as the United Nations Secretary General's Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, I have often considered how governments and civil society throughout the world can avoid the type of devastation we witnessed in the Indian Ocean region on December 26, 2004.

Natural hazards will always exist. Poverty, urbanization, environmental degradation, and climate change will only increase the risks of them. It is therefore critical that governments and other stakeholders, such as international financial institutions, NGOs, and the private sector and media, accelerate efforts to implement a broad range of risk reduction measures.

We must also learn from past disasters. I hope there is now broad recognition that building back better means going beyond simply improving the way things were, but rather building a recovery process that leaves communities safer and more secure.

Not just safer homes, but also stronger public facilities such as schools, hospitals, power systems, telecommunications infrastructure. Not just new disaster-related agencies, but fully functioning early warning systems that reach the coast line and citizens that leave them more aware and better informed of how to cope with natural hazards.

I want to thank the organizers of this forum, as well as the participants for your commitment to disaster reduction.

I wish you God speed on this critical work.

Thank you.