



Mr. Ban Ki-moon

Secretary-General of the United Nations

Opening statement by video, first session of the
Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction
Geneva, 5-7 June 2007

Dear colleagues and friends,

It has been two and a half years since the Indian Ocean tsunami struck with deadly force across several countries in Asia and Africa. That calamity was followed by many others, including the earthquakes in Pakistan, hurricanes in the Caribbean and the Gulf Coast and typhoons in Asia. Tens of thousands of lives were lost – lives that could have been saved, had simple, cost-effective risk reduction policies been put in place.

That is why this meeting is so important. We must act with renewed commitment to save lives and livelihoods from the effects of natural hazards - particularly in developing nations, where the world's poorest are also the most vulnerable.

And we must act with even greater urgency given the impact of climate change. Scientists warn that more extreme weather is on the way, with rising sea levels and more intense storms and droughts. This could affect millions of people. Risk reduction is our front-line defence against these threats.

Risk reduction is also about common-sense practices that help protect communities when earthquakes strike or floods threaten. Practices that can save lives in mega-cities tottering close to the edge of disasters, as a result of poor land usage, unsafe buildings, over-population and environmental degradation.

In the aftermath of the tsunami, almost 170 governments joined together to create the Hyogo Framework – a plan of action to reduce our collective vulnerability to natural hazards. Let us fulfil the promise of Hyogo. Let us use this first session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction to act with a common purpose. In that spirit, I wish you a most productive session.