

PRESS RELEASE



United Nations Development Programme

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International Day for Disaster Reduction – towards building more resilient communities

Male', October 13, 2010: To promote resilient and sustainable urban communities, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other UN agencies are marking the International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR) today.

IDDR, celebrated annually, is an opportunity to focus attention on the work to make communities around the world safer from disasters. The 2010-2011 World Disaster Reduction Campaign, coordinated by the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), specifically urges local governments to contribute to greater risk reduction.

Following the global theme of 'Resilient Cities', Maldives has adapted a local theme, focusing on "Making Islands Resilient: My Island is Getting Ready". Male' Municipality is one of 118 cities in the world which are participating in this campaign.

While urbanisation brings many gains, badly governed cities and islands can put thousands of people's lives and livelihoods in danger. Poor planning and a lack of political commitment to improve the urban environment means that people who lack essential services remain at high risk of being affected by a range of disasters, including hazards that Maldives is prone to, such as flooding, storm surges, sea swells and tsunamis.

"The recent flash flooding in Seenu Atoll provides a stark reminder of how disasters can set back development programs in this country," said UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Mr. Andrew Cox, in his speech on the occasion of IDDR.

Mr. Cox stated that although the country has improved preparedness for natural disasters, there is still a long way to go until we can confidently say "we are aware and prepared", and emphasized how partnership between government and communities is so important. IDDR offers an opportunity to mobilize communities and organizations to take steps to reduce disaster risks and look and develop new efficient technologies and mechanisms to reduce the impact of natural disasters.

UNDP is working in partnership with communities and government through activities such as the national public awareness campaign on disaster risk reduction, early warning and response actions "Rakkaavethibiyya Dhivehi Raajje" (be aware, be prepared), launched in 2009.

"Reducing disaster risk is everybody's business, and needs everyone's participation and investment – civil society and professional networks as well as municipal and national governments." - UN Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-moon

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UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, including the Maldives, helping identify and implement solutions to global and national development challenges.