

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON CALLS ON MEMBER STATES TO USE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION FOR CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

(New York, 30 September 2008): Disaster impacts and losses continue to rise globally, and weather related disasters are affecting millions more people around the world. The cyclone in Myanmar, floods in India and the current hurricane season in the Caribbean are recent examples of weather extremes that are predicted to worsen with climate change.

To help Member States find solutions to cope with climatic disasters, BAN Ki-moon, the United Nations Secretary-General, convened a ministerial meeting in New York yesterday.

The Secretary-General called on ministers to lead the way at Poznan, Poland, in championing disaster risk reduction as a core element of climate change adaptation. He urged Governments to give high priority to implementing disaster risk reduction measures, in order to achieve the goals set by the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015).

“We must not delay,” said the Secretary-General. “If we are too slow to adapt to climate change, we risk making disasters even more catastrophic than they need to be. We must draw on the Hyogo Framework for Action and disaster risk reduction knowledge to protect the world’s most vulnerable populations against climate change.”

Disaster risk reduction measures are already helping to lower the impact of natural hazards. For example, the planting of mangroves in Vietnam, and Chinese investment in flood control, have saved lives and avoided significant economic losses. China’s US\$3.1 billion flood control spending between 1960 and 2000 is estimated to have averted losses of about US\$12 billion, according to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The ministerial meeting took place at the ECOSOC Chamber of the United Nations Headquarters in New York, and aimed to promote disaster risk reduction policies and practices as one of the key solutions for adapting to climate change. The meeting also urged substantial scaling up of disaster risk reduction funds at national and international levels, in order to reduce the vulnerability of the most affected and the poorest.