

## Press release

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### ECONOMIC LOSSES FROM DISASTERS SET NEW RECORD IN 2012

**14 March 2013, GENEVA** – The UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) today stated that for the first time in history the world has experienced three consecutive years where annual economic losses have exceeded \$100 billion due to an enormous increase in exposure of industrial assets and private property to extreme disaster events.

UNISDR Director, Elizabeth Longworth, speaking at a press briefing today, said: “A review of economic losses caused by major disaster events since 1980 shows that since the mid-90s there has been a rise in economic losses and this has turned into an upward trend as confirmed by the losses from last year when, despite no mega-disaster such as a major urban earthquake, economic losses are conservatively estimated in the region of \$138 billion.”

It's happened on nine occasions since including the last three years: 2010 (\$138 bn), 2011 (\$371 bn) and 2012 (\$138 bn). Some 310 disasters killed over 9,300 people in 2012 and affected 106 million others and cost 138 billion US\$ (mainly in the US, Italy and China).

The year was particularly marked by the fact there were no mega-disasters in terms of human impact. The deadliest event was Typhoon Bopha which hit the Philippines in December with over 1,900 dead and missing. Asia, once more showed itself to be the most disaster-prone part of the world both in terms of number of disasters and the number of victims.

On the other hand, 63% of the economic losses were in the Americas, mainly due to Hurricane Sandy (\$50 bn) and the drought (\$20 bn). Europe was hit by two long cold waves at the beginning and end of the year killing almost 1,000 people and Africa was severely affected by drought but also by floods such as those in Nigeria which took over 300 lives.

“Globally, most victims this year were from floods and droughts which were responsible for nearly 80% of all victims. But as they occur in poorer countries, the economic losses are low. Even so, the floods of Pakistan cost nearly 2% of its annual GDP which is a lot to recover. Disasters are a major problem in all poor countries and threats to global security. They should be taken seriously,” said Prof. Debby Guha-Sapir, Director of CRED at the University of Louvain, Belgium.

#### General

- Preliminary data for 2012: Some 310 disasters killed 9,330 people in 2012, affected 106 million others and cost US\$ 138 billion

- The year was marked by the fact that there were no mega-disasters in terms of human impact. The deadliest event was Typhoon Bopha in Philippines in December 2012 which resulted in 1,901 persons dead or missing.
- Economic losses mainly due to hurricane Sandy (October 2012) and drought affecting the US (respectively 50 and 20 billion US\$) and the two successive earthquakes in Italy in May (\$15.8 billion)
- In 2012, 43.23% of all disasters were hydrological disasters or flood events and these were also responsible for 57% of total number of affected persons, 42% of persons killed but only 15% of economic damages.
- 54% of economic damages were due to meteorological disasters, mainly from Hurricane Sandy's impact on the USA.

#### **Continents:**

- \* In 2012, more than 42% of disasters occurred in Asia. It is also the continent with the highest share of deaths (64%) and the highest share of affected people (68%). On the other hand, 63% of the year's economic damage was in the Americas.
- \* Europe experienced two long cold waves (beginning 2012 and end 2012) affecting respectively 27 and 10 countries and killing almost 1000 people. Italy had two earthquakes (same region, Emilia Romagna) having minor human impact but high economic losses (15 billion US\$).
- \* The Americas were mainly affected by two major events which lead to high economic losses: hurricane Sandy affecting the USA and the Caribbean and the drought in the USA.
- \* In Africa, 82% of people died because of floods and 65% were affected because of drought (and 33% of affected due to floods)

*\*Source: EM-DAT: the OFDA/CRED international Disaster Database*

**About UNISDR:** UNISDR is the UN office dedicated to disaster risk reduction. It is led by the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction and supports implementation of the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters* which seeks "the substantial reduction of disaster losses, in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries."

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