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PRESS RELEASE

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*CRED DISASTER FIGURES*¹ Deaths and economic losses jump in 2008

Geneva – 2008 saw a marked increase in the number of deaths and economic losses compared to the 2000-2007 yearly average. The Center for Research on Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) released disaster figures for 2008 today in Geneva at a joint press conference with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) Secretariat.

In 2008, 321 disasters killed 235,816 people, affected 211 million others and cost a total of US\$181 billion. Asia remained the main affected continent. Nine of the top 10 countries with the highest number of disaster-related deaths were in Asia

The death toll in 2008 was three times more than the annual average of 66,812 for 2000-2007 and was mainly caused by two major events: Cyclone Nargis which killed 138,366 people in Myanmar and the Sichuan earthquake in China which caused the deaths of 87,476 people.

The number of people affected by disasters in 2008 was below the 2000-2007 annual average of 231 million. Only 42 million people were affected by floods in 2008 compared to 164 million in 2007. Nevertheless, floods remained one of the most frequent disaster events in 2008 along with other weather-related disasters.

Disaster costs in 2008 were twice the US\$81 billion annual average for 2000-2007 and mainly attributed to the Sichuan earthquake in China (US\$85 billion) and hurricane Ike in the U.S. (US\$30 billion).

“The dramatic increase in human and economic losses from disasters in 2008 is alarming. Sadly, these losses could have been substantially reduced if buildings in China, particularly schools and hospitals, had been built to be more earthquake-resilient. An effective early warning system with good community preparedness could have also saved many lives in Myanmar if it had been implemented before Cyclone Nargis,” said Salvano Briceño, Director of UNISDR.

The number of disasters that occurred in 2008 was 321 – below the annual average of 398 for 2000–2007.

¹ Epidemics, insect infestations and technological disasters are not included

“Although fewer disasters occurred in 2008, events seem to have a larger impact on human settlements. This is especially true in middle income countries such as China which was the largest contributor to economic losses last year. As countries move up the development ladder, their economic vulnerability tends to increase. Ideally, these countries need to invest more in disaster risk reduction measures if they want to better protect development gains,” said Professor Debarati Guha-Sapir, Director of CRED.

DISASTER FIGURES FOR 2000 TO 2008

Year	Occurrence	No. killed	No. affected	Economic damages ⁽¹⁾
2000	413	9,686	173,154,137	45,724
2001	379	30,981	108,735,282	27,049
2002	422	12,657	660,331,639	52,085
2003	360	109,991	254,988,805	69,810
2004	355	241,647	161,718,429	136,175
2005	434	89,162	160,243,390	214,202
2006	401	23,502	122,309,007	34,105
2007	416	16,871	211,224,622	75,054
2008	321	235,816	211,626,186	181,152
Total	3,501	770,313	2,064,331,497	835,357

(1): In current US\$ million

Background information

To access the EM-DAT database, visit <http://www.emdat.be>

CRED is a World Health Organization collaborating centre based in Brussels. Since 1988, CRED has been maintaining an Emergency Events Database known as EM-DAT. EM-DAT includes all disasters from 1900 until present, which fit at least one of the following criteria:

- 10 or more people killed.
- 100 or more people affected.
- Declaration of a state of emergency.
- Call for international assistance.

To access the EM-DAT database, visit <http://www.emdat.be/Database/terms.html>.

EM-DAT data is also available at <http://www.PreventionWeb.net> on all country and hazard pages. PreventionWeb.net is the ISDR System website.

For more information on the CRED figures, please also contact:

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