



United Nations
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Three European countries among the top ten deadliest disasters of 2006

If Asia is still the continent most hit by disasters triggered by natural hazards, three European countries: Netherlands, Belgium and Ukraine rank among the top ten countries most affected by deadly disasters, according to the figures released today by the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) in a press conference co-organised by the secretariat of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction in Geneva.

“Netherlands and Belgium were in 4th and 5th place among the ten countries reporting the most deaths caused by disasters in 2006. Netherlands registered 1000 deaths and Belgium 940, both due to the heat wave in July. Ukraine appears at the eighth position with 801 dead by cold wave”, says Debarati Guha-Sapir, director of CRED. “The small increase in extreme temperature events has affected Europe in an unusual way.”

Asia remains the continent most hit by disasters, with 5778 persons killed in Indonesia last May by an earthquake and 2511 deaths in the Philippines due to typhoon Durian in December and a landslide in February.

“The 2006 figures confirm the trends that we have been observing since 2000 ” adds Debarati Guha-Sapir from CRED. “The number of people killed by disasters has been decreasing if we do not take into account the two mega events: the tsunami in the Indian Ocean and the earthquake in Pakistan. On the other hand, the number of people affected remains high even if the 2006 figure is relatively lower than in 2005 and 2004.”

Among the other figures underlined by CRED are the number of floods, which continue to rise in 2006 with 226 occurrences compared to an average of 162 over the past six years, and the number of extreme temperature events, which increased from 23 in average to 30 in 2006.

“Floods and storms are two major events that have dramatic and long-term effects on poor people. The small rise in extreme events is indicating that we might have to suffer more from the negative impact of climate change in the future. We need to be better prepared globally and not only in Asia and Africa. The latest storms in Britain, Germany, Holland and Russia that killed more than 40 people show that even countries with the best early warning systems are in danger. People ignore warnings and think they are immune,” says Salvano Briceño, Director of the ISDR secretariat in Geneva.

“On the positive side”, says professor Debarati Guha-Sapir, “damage was very low in 2006 with a total of 19 billion US\$ compared to the 210 billion US\$ in 2005. No country with high insurance density or high value assets was affected last year by a massive disaster”.

In 2005, hurricanes Katrina, Wilma and Rita in the US accounted for more than 166 billion US \$ of the total of 210 billion US\$ economic losses.

Statistics: Disasters in 2006

Occurrence of natural disasters (Epidemics and insect infestations) excluded: 395 disasters (country-level) from which 226 are floods

- Total deaths: 21,342
- Total affected : 134.5 million
- Estimated damage: 19 billion US\$

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