

UNDP Azerbaijan Development Bulletin

10 Years of Humanitarian Intervention in Azerbaijan : Impact, Lessons, Future Directions, UNHCR Conference, 17-18 February, Baku



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Azertag, 27 January 2004

RISK INDEX ESTABLISHED BY UNDP

Caspian Business News, 9 February 2004



BAKU, Azerbaijan - The United Nations Development Program last week presented its global report on "Reducing Disaster Risk: A challenge for Development" to representatives of the UN, government officials and NGOs in Baku. By focusing on a global report concerning natural disasters, UNDP aimed at demonstrating how development can be negatively and seriously influenced by cataclysms of nature. "As a result of natural disasters, about 15 million people died in the last 20 years around the world. This means that every day 184 people were victims of natural disaster" David Eizenberg, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative told his audience.

Some 75 percent of the world's population lives in areas that were affected at least once by earthquake, tropical cyclone, flood or drought between 1980 and 2000. Natural disaster risk is closely connected to processes of human development. Disasters, he said, put development at risk.

"At the same time, the development choices made by individuals, communities and nations can generate new risk. In comparison with developed nations, natural disasters have greater negative consequence in developing countries. This is due mainly to bad or inefficient management and ignorance" IradaAhmedova, Program Adviser for UNDP said.

In order to systematize the impact of natural disasters on countries, the UNDP has begun development of a Disaster Risk Index (DRI) in order to improve understanding of the relationship between development and disaster risk.

"For example, while taking earthquake into consideration, countries with high urban growth rates and high physical exposure are associated with high levels of risk. Meanwhile, flooding, another major cause of natural disaster, has a much more serious impact in those countries with low per capita Gross Domestic Product, low local density of population, and high physical exposure" Ahmedova said.

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"While putting disasters into some form of hierarchy, I would like to put earthquake in first place, followed by flooding. These two forms of disasters have always been destructive to both urban and rural areas" Hebib Ocagov, head of "Fovgal" NGO said.

The UNDP global report particularly highlighted China and India as being the most exposed to natural disasters. Azerbaijan's position, in terms of susceptibility to earthquake, is placed on a moderate level.

"I do not agree with the fact that Armenia is separated from South Caucasus and labeled as the most vulnerable country to earthquakes. The entire region of Southern Caucasus, which includes Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia, is on the same level of risk in terms of the possibility of earthquake. I would not wish Azerbaijan to compete with Armenia in terms of the number of earthquakes suffered, but the time span of 20 years is not enough for the definition of such a risk index. While commenting on the most vulnerable regions of Azerbaijan, I would like to name Shemakhi, Ismayilli and Gendje," said Gurban Yetirmish, head of the Republican Seismological Center.

According to the report, urbanization and rural livelihood can be defined as two key variables in terms of association with disaster risks reflected in the DRI. Over the current decade, population increase will occur in urban areas in the ^countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and Caribbean, with more than half of the world's population becoming urbanized by 2007. Moreover, about 70 percent of the world's poor live in the rural areas and whose livelihood is being affected by global climate change.

"However, it is possible to manage natural disasters and end up with less serious consequences. Appropriate governance is fundamental if risk considerations are to be factored into development planning and if existing risks are to be successfully mitigated," Ahmadova concluded.



The building of the Azerbaijan State Philharmony named after Muslim Magomayev was solemnly opened after major repairs, on January 27. President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev participated in the ceremony. Dear memory of the nationwide leader, President Heydar Aliyev was ordered with a minute of silence. Minister of Culture Polad bulbul oglu, rector of Baku Musical Academy, prof. Farhad Badalbayli, young violinist, Presidential scholar Jamila Musayeva and world-known musician, our fellow countryman Mstislav Rostropovich delivered speeches at the ceremony. Afterwards, a concert dedicated to the opening was held.

In bright memory of his dear and beloved friend, genial son of Azerbaijan people, President Heydar Aliyev, maestro Mstislav Rostropovich performed in violin Johan Sebastian Bach's Sarabande from partite N 2.

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