

## INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR DISASTER REDUCTION (IDDR) 2017 “Home Safe Home”

For many persons, Friday the thirteenth is considered to be a day of misfortunes. However, there is more to Friday, October 13, 2017 than just a superstitious belief. In fact, annually October 13, marks the celebration of the International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR). According to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (2016), the IDDR is “a celebration of how people and communities around the world are reducing their exposure to disasters and raising awareness about the importance of reining-in the risks that they face”.

The 2016 edition of the IDDR marked the launch of the new "Sendai Seven Campaign", centred on the seven targets of the Sendai Framework. The Sendai Framework for disaster reduction is a non-binding agreement between nation states and the UNISDR on a voluntary basis. The fifteen (15) year agreement from 2016-2030, identifies the State as the primary agent in disaster risk reduction and how responsibility should be shared via the involvement of the private sector and relevant stakeholders. From 2016-2022, a new target for disaster risk reduction will be promoted each year to be achieved by the year 2030. (See Figure 1)

The focus for the IDDR 2017 is Target (b) which aims to reduce the number of individuals affected by disasters globally through measures of prevention and protection. Through the slogan for the 2017 IDDR, “*Home Safe Home*”, the UNISDR has emphasized the need for the home to be the primary hub of safety in order to reach the proposed target. That is, the home should be able to prevent the displacement of families and ultimately the loss of lives in the event

### THE SEVEN GLOBAL TARGETS

- a) 2016: Substantially reduce global disaster mortality by 2030, aiming to lower average per 100,000 global mortality rate in the decade 2020-2030 compared to the period 2005-2015.
- b) 2017: Substantially reduce the number of affected people globally by 2030, aiming to lower average global figure per 100,000 in the decade 2020 -2030 compared to the period 2005-2015.
- c) 2018: Reduce direct disaster economic loss in relation to global gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030
- d) 2019: Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, among them health and educational facilities, including through developing their resilience by 2030.
- e) 2020: Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020.
- f) 2021: Substantially enhance international cooperation to developing countries through adequate and sustainable support to complement their national actions for implementation of this Framework by 2030.
- g) 2022: Substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to the people by 2030.

**Figure 1 above: The Seven yearly targets proposed by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction to be achieved over the fifteen (15) year framework period of 2016-2030.**

Source: United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (2017)

of a disaster. This year's emphasis on Target (b) is indeed timely as we note the devastation to the homes and livelihoods of some of our Caribbean neighbours, after the passage of the Category 5 Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

The 2017 campaign targets vulnerable groups including women, children, the elderly and those with disabilities. It also targets families, especially those who reside in low-income communities. The reasons for the focus on these groups are justified. The statistics provided by the UNISDR (2016) report that in the last twenty (20) years, women and children have recorded the most deaths due to their vulnerability and exposure to natural hazards. Statistics also indicate that families have been negatively impacted, as four (4) billion individuals have been displaced and left homeless in the last two (2) decades following the impacts of disasters.

If hazards such as earthquakes, tropical cyclones and tsunamis occurred in isolation, life as we know it would be less eventful. In reality however, these hazards often negatively impact populations causing the loss of life or damage to property. Several examples of the destruction that hazards have caused exist across the globe. From the Indian Ocean Earthquake in 2004 which caused a tsunami

that impacted the coasts of Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Southern India to Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017 which were responsible for overwhelming infrastructural damage on the islands Barbuda and Dominica.

Despite the fact that Barbados has not experienced any severe hazard impacts in recent years, our island is not immune to the potential risks associated with various natural hazards. In the words of the famous American scientist Neil deGrasse Tyson, "Even with all our technology and the inventions that make modern life so much easier than it once was, it takes just one big natural disaster to wipe all that away and remind us that, here on Earth, we're still at the mercy of nature". Whether we are prepared or unprepared, knowledgeable or ignorant, the risks of hazards will always exist. Though we may not be able to predict the occurrence of a hazard with one hundred percent (100%) certainty, the United Nations Office for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR)

### TIPS TO HELP MAKE YOUR "HOME SAFE HOME"

1. Secure and seal your roof. Mitigation tools such as hurricane straps may be employed for this purpose.
2. Protect all openings to your home including windows and doors. This may be done using custom made shutters.
3. Keep your surroundings free of debris as this will likely become dangerous missiles during the occurrence of high winds.
4. Ensure that gutters and downspouts on and around your property are kept free of blockages. This this will help to reduce the speed and or occurrence of flooding.
5. Have your emergency supplies kit ready. This kit should include adequate supplies of non-perishable food (at least enough for 3 days), water (1- 2 gallons per person per day), first aid supplies, medication and torch lights with batteries.
6. Where possible insure your house and its contents.



has reinforced that all nations can take action to build resilience to and awareness about potential disasters.

### **References**

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. 2016. "UNISDR launches "Sendai Seven" campaign to save lives in disasters". Accessed August 14, 2017.  
<http://www.unisdr.org/archive/49524>.