

# COVID-19, climate change and disaster resilience: Time for Leadership and Action



# COVID-19, climate change and disaster resilience: Time for Leadership and Action

by Irina Zodrow, Head of the UNDRR Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement Unit, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

When, in 2015, the UN Member States signed up to the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#), they called on the world to stop trying to manage disasters after they strike and instead comprehensively reduce and prevent [all natural and man-made hazards and risk](#) before the tragedy.

Yet, in practice, implementing this ask over the past five years often seemed a little too much and a little too complicated for policy-, business- and other decision makers already busy grappling with climate change whilst responding to a series of relentless disasters.

2020 has changed this view dramatically. Indeed, it seems like the whole world is talking about risk and resilience these days. As [Mark Carney](#) put it, 'after decades of risk being downloaded onto individuals, the bill has arrived, and people do not know how to pay it'. Sadly, it took a global disaster like COVID-19, coupled with runaway climate change, to raise our awareness and make 'risk' a topic for everyone.

Yet, the current tragic situation is also an opportunity for radical systemic change away from the insane cycle of disaster-respond-repair-repeat and towards risk prevention.

Recognizing the setback COVID-19 inflicted on the climate and development goals, [Governments recently reiterated](#) the need for a **more coherent approach to managing climate change and broader disaster risks, including pandemics**, and a better understanding of related fiscal risks.

For this to happen, we need a clear vision, plans and competent, empowered and accountable institutions acting on scientific evidence for the public good. We need to rephrase our economic narrative to internalize economic, financial, environmental and social vectors and accurately price climate and disaster risks within all public and private financing and investment.

And, probably the biggest challenge, we all need to review our behaviors, be open for change and work hand-in-hand to build resilience. As pointed out in the [2019 Global Assessment Report and the IMF](#), farmers are beacons of resilience through their critical role in national and local food value chains as well as for the sustainability of the global food system, both crucial ingredients for global political and financial stability. As such, this is a call for leadership and action.



Irina Zodrow is the Head of the UNDRR Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement Unit at the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. In her role, Irina leads the engagement with the private and financial sector, science and academia, civil society organizations and Parliamentarians, including facilitating collaborative, cross-sectoral approaches to risk reduction and resilience.



For more  
information

[www.UNDRR.org](http://www.UNDRR.org)