

Geneva, 25 January 2010

IPCC STATEMENT ON TRENDS IN DISASTER LOSSES

The January 24 Sunday Times ran a misleading and baseless story attacking the way the Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC handled an important question concerning recent trends in economic losses from climate-related disasters. The article, entitled “UN Wrongly Linked Global Warming to Natural Disasters”, is by Jonathan Leake.

The Sunday Times article gets the story wrong on two key points. The first is that it incorrectly assumes that a brief section on trends in economic losses from climate-related disasters is everything the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report (2007) has to say about changes in extremes and disasters. In fact, the Fourth Assessment Report reaches many important conclusions, at many locations in the report, about the role of climate change in extreme events. The assessment addresses both observations of past changes and projections of future changes in sectors ranging from heat waves and precipitation to wildfires. Each of these is a careful assessment of the available evidence, with a thorough consideration of the confidence with which each conclusion can be drawn. The second problem with the article in the Sunday Times is its baseless attack on the section of the report on trends in economic losses from disasters. This section of the IPCC report is a balanced treatment of a complicated and important issue. It clearly makes the point that one study detected an increase in economic losses, corrected for values at risk, but that other studies have not detected such a trend. The tone is balanced, and the section contains many important qualifiers. In writing, reviewing, and editing this section, IPCC procedures were carefully followed to produce the policy-relevant assessment that is the IPCC mandate.

Media Contact:
Brenda Abrar-Milani
Babrar@wmo.int
Tel. +41 22 730 8396

IPCC Secretariat

c/o WMO · 7 bis, Avenue de la Paix · C.P. 2300 · CH-1211 Geneva 2 · Switzerland
telephone +41 22 730 8208 / 54 / 84 · fax +41 22 730 8025 / 13 · email IPCC-Sec@wmo.int · www.ipcc.ch

