

**6th World Landslide Forum
Florence, 14 November 2023
Opening Plenary Session
Message from Lidia Arthur Brito
Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences of UNESCO**

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I am honoured to speak before you at the sixth World Landslide Forum. This forum serves as a vital platform, uniting distinguished experts to foster cooperation and synergy, ensuring that no one is left behind in our collective efforts to reduce the risk of landslides.

While I regret not being able to stand before you in person, I find immense joy in witnessing the return of this conference to its in-person format. Three years ago, due to the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, UNESCO and 90 other organizations had to virtually sign the Kyoto 2020 Commitment during the last World Landslide Forum.

The roots of the International Consortium of Landslides trace back 21 years to the symposium jointly organized by UNESCO and Kyoto University. UNESCO's unwavering support for this consortium remains steadfast.

This year, humanity has faced profound tests, with natural hazards occurring more frequently, exacting an ever-growing human and economic toll. In May, landslides caused by flooding around Lake Kivu claimed nearly 600 lives in communities residing in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Despite mounting evidence indicating that natural hazards are becoming increasingly costly, prevention has not received the prioritization it deserves. Our focus must shift beyond disaster response and recovery to encompass disaster preparedness, enhancing the resilience of people, businesses, communities, and nations. In 2022, UNESCO aided 52 countries in updating their disaster preparedness frameworks. For instance, we collaborated with masons, architects, and engineers in developing nations, fortifying buildings to resist earthquakes.

To minimize the risk of landslides, we are implementing a diverse range of approaches. We are introducing early warning systems for floods, combining drone

and satellite technology with sensors and in situ monitoring tools. However, not all solutions rely on sophisticated technology. We are also championing nature-based solutions, such as reforesting deforested hillsides to reduce the likelihood of heavy rain triggering landslides.

UNESCO is committed to actively addressing the six priorities outlined in the Florence Declaration adopted this year. This includes fostering collaboration among scientists, researchers, engineers, practitioners, policymakers, and other stakeholders. We eagerly anticipate working hand in hand with all of you in this noble endeavour.

Thank you.