



Press Release

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PARTNERS IN HUMANITY

“The Asian tsunami is the greatest humanitarian disaster in recent world history. It is even more tragic because a report produced 17 years ago could have reduced some of the casualties”, said His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal.

“The Report of the International Commission on International Humanitarian Issues, which I co-chaired, set out, among other things, a blueprint for disaster management. We pointed out that the international community has failed to construct a viable method of operating for dealing effectively with the humanitarian dimensions of disasters.

“17 years later, that is still the case. The report – published as “Winning the Human Race?” – still languishes on the United Nations General Assembly annual agenda.

“The report was completed by a group of persons from 29 countries, representing all regions of the world. It remains one of the most thorough examinations of its type.

“The Report called for National Frameworks for Disaster Management. Earthquakes, tidal waves, floods, volcanic eruptions and landslides are distinguished from other disasters because they are instantaneous and prompted by climatic or geological forces. Their destructiveness, such as this week’s catastrophe in the Indian Ocean, depends more on the number of vulnerable people in a given area than on their inherent severity. In many parts of the world, man-made errors exacerbate the damage they cause, e.g., those residing in poorly constructed buildings are the most vulnerable.

“Therefore, I again call on the international community to implement the report as quickly as possible.

“The loss of life has been a tragedy”, said Prince Hassan. “It will be an even greater tragedy if the international community fails to learn the lesson for the better handling of disaster management”.

“I welcome the forthcoming Jakarta conference. I very much hope that the report’s recommendations can form the agenda of that meeting and so ensure the speedy implementation of the report”, said His Royal Highness.

HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal is Chairman of the Independent Bureau for Humanitarian Issues; Moderator of the World Conference of Religions for Peace; President of the Club of Rome and the Arab Thought Forum.