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UN praises Hudhud management in Odisha, Andhra Pradesh

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BHUBANESWAR: The United Nations has appreciated the Odisha and Andhra Pradesh government's disaster preparedness during cyclone Hudhud.

"India has clearly demonstrated that a 'zero casualty' focus in the face of extreme weather events is both feasible and actionable following its second major success in 12 months at minimizing loss of life in the face of a severe cyclone packing winds of up to 200 kmph,' head of United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) Margareta Wahlstrom said, in a media release.

"India's journey from the loss of 10,000 people in the Odisha super cyclone of 1999 to today's relatively low death tolls from similar events demonstrates the value of agreeing on global priorities for reducing disaster risk," she added.

Wahlstrom, who in November 2013 handed over to chief minister Naveen Patnaik a citation recognizing 'effective coordination and preparedness' during cyclone Phailin, said: "The continuous stream of bulletins and alerts from the state governments of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha inspired confidence. The Indian National Coastal, Ocean Information Systems and the National Disaster Management Authority also played vital roles in ensuring that all measures taken were based on real-time sea and weather forecasts. Science, technology, education and logistical preparations all played their part in this latest success."

India has demonstrated again to the world that if the bar for reducing exposure to risk is high then many lives can be saved and economic losses reduced, she said. "Cyclone Hudhud was just as great a threat as last year's cyclone Phailin to a densely populated coastline. The authorities, with the support of the India Meteorological Department, acted with speed to order the evacuation of up to 400,000 people," she noted.

She said the Indian experience will be referenced in Geneva next month at the second session of the preparatory committee of the third UN world conference on disaster risk reduction meeting in Geneva which will seek to finalize a draft of a new global framework for disaster risk reduction. It will be presented for adoption in Japan next year. "The new post-2015 framework will revise the existing Hyogo Framework for Action which was adopted in 2005 after the Indian Ocean tsunami," she informed.