

Media Release

Canterbury's strength in recovery highlighted at United Nations forum

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Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority chief executive Roger Sutton has highlighted the resilience of the Canterbury economy, and the value of strong expertise and institutions behind the Christchurch rebuild, in a speech to a United Nations forum last night.

Mr Sutton was speaking at the 4th Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Geneva, Switzerland.

The Global Platform is a biennial forum attended by more than 2000 representatives from member states of the United Nations, including the United Nations' Deputy Secretary General, heads of state and government ministers.

In his address to one of the forum sessions last night (NZ time), Mr Sutton outlined the extent of the earthquake damage to greater Christchurch and how the region had responded.

"Despite the fact that the damage level is very, very high, our economy in Christchurch actually has never stopped," Mr Sutton said.

"The economy is actually stronger than it's ever been."

Mr Sutton explained the challenge of bringing the private sector together with the public sector to rebuild extensively damaged infrastructure. Important lessons had been learned from going through this process.

"The first lesson is that speed counts. Unless you fix your infrastructure quickly in any city, nothing else gets going."

Another lesson was the need to get the very best expertise to support the rebuild process.

Mr Sutton said the biggest lesson so far was the value of strong public sector institutions and good governance.

"Cranes and bulldozers and diggers can be hired - they are really just commodities. Institutions and good governance can't be bought. And when things are really turning to custard, you need strong institutions."

Aside from attending the forum in Geneva, Mr Sutton is also travelling to London, where he is meeting several groups that have an interest in the Christchurch rebuild, including philanthropic contacts, and looking at developments with a relevance to the Christchurch rebuild.

He is due to return to his duties in Christchurch next week.