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Sommario/riassunto	A seemingly non-stop series of disasters has shown that societies worldwide seem unprepared for the threats posed by natural hazards: Hurricane Katrina, drought in Africa; flooding in China and Germany; earthquakes in Pakistan and India; a tsunami in South-East Asia; and forest fires in Portugal, Australia and North America. The tragic impacts of these events drew short-term attention from policy makers, the media and the general public, but their response was too late to prevent serious harm. Societies need to measure their vulnerabilities in advance, and make adequate provisions. To do s