



United Nations  
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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **UN And Partners Produce Independent Assessment Report On Disaster Risk Reduction Efforts In Dominican Republic**

Santo Domingo, 19 July – The Dominican Republic today became the first country to receive a progress report from the United Nations and partners on its efforts to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action – the internationally-agreed framework for disaster risk reduction endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2005 – receiving recommendations to strengthen building codes and incorporate “vulnerability reduction” targets in projects funded by both the public and private sector.

Margareta Wahlström, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, presented the report on behalf of several United Nations agencies and partner organizations, comprising UNISDR, UNESCO, WMO, UNDP, OCHA, ECLAC, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), at an event attended by members of the National Council for Disaster Prevention, Mitigation and Response in Santo Domingo.

It was the first time a country had requested the UN to conduct an independent assessment of its own disaster risk reduction efforts. The assessment was conducted in May following the government’s request in December 2009.

“This exercise demonstrates the government’s good will and commitment in fulfilling its obligations to people of the Dominican Republic,” said Ms. Wahlström. “Because the report represents the shared view of many experts within and outside the United Nations, it can also be used by the government to rally political support.”

Among its recommendations, the report suggests tightening norms for designing public infrastructure, including procedures used in determining where structures are physically located. It also recommends that the government review – and where needed, develop – bylaws and norms for construction, whether national or local, to include considerations of risk. Public and private investment projects should also incorporate aspects of vulnerability reduction, the report says.

Another recommendation is that the Dominican Republic – which shares an island with Haiti – adopt an “island approach” to disaster assessment, and to consider joint intervention for disaster mitigation.

“The two countries share areas that can be affected by the same kinds of hazards, which they should approach in bilateral fashion,” explained Ricardo Mena, Chief of the UNISDR regional office for the Americas, based in Panama City. “In terms of hurricane alert systems, they can exchange information on when a hurricane will hit border areas.”

To stem land degradation on the island, which is another contributing factor for disasters, Mr. Mena said promoting gas as a cooking fuel could help slow down the rate at which trees are being cut down for charcoal – a popular source of energy in Haiti. Using subsidies was one way to motivate people and influence their preference, he said.

Following the report’s launch, Ms. Wahlström spoke to an audience of international government officials and members of civil society and academia to promote the *Making Cities Resilient* campaign, which began in May and is spearheaded by UNISDR, ICLEI, UN-HABITAT and others. So far, 59 cities have joined the campaign, including 12 from the Americas.

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