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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Europe's cold snap underscores importance of disaster risk reduction to manage climate-related hazards**

Geneva -- The experience of Europe's big cities, immobilized by the recent cold snap, shows that the world may be under-prepared to deal with less predictable climate patterns, says UNISDR.

In parts of France and Great Britain, heavy snow last week left commuters stranded in their cars for hours. Between 10 to 20 cm of snowfall brought airports to a standstill in many cities – including Geneva, Paris, London and Berlin. And, throughout Europe, thousands of households suffered power outages after the first snowfall.

“National meteorological services in Europe did well to issue warnings, but being prepared goes beyond prediction,” said Margareta Wahlström, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction. “A complete and effective early warning system also requires planners to understand the risks they face, so that they are able to respond appropriately.”

The four elements of effective early warning systems are the ability to understand risk, having good forecasting system in place, maintaining effective communication channels, and having adequate capacity to respond.

Ms. Wahlström said warnings issued by local Met offices only complement a local disaster preparedness strategy. But, even more necessary for saving lives and assets is a better understanding of what makes citizens vulnerable.

“We are encouraging local authorities to recognize the risks unique to their community,” she said, referring to the ‘Making Cities Resilient’ campaign that UNISDR and its partners launched in May. “We recognize that local governments are at the frontline when disasters strike. They are the ones who must set a budget, outline roles and responsibilities and conduct risk assessments.”

So far, over 150 cities have joined the campaign. Mayor Marcelo Ebrard of Mexico City, a member of the campaign who led 138 mayors to sign the ‘Mexico City Pact’ to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, was named Campaign Champion by Ms. Wahlström in November.

UNISDR plans to convene an international conference in Geneva in May -- Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction – whose focus will be on increasing investment for local resilience.

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