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Cebu leads in Making Local Government Units Resilient to Disasters

Cebu City, Philippines – 39 municipalities of Cebu Province, Philippines, today pledged to make their local government units safer from disasters, by joining the United Nations disaster reduction campaign “*Making Cities Resilient: My City Is Getting Ready!*” while gathered at the Cebu Provincial Capitol Social Hall, N. Escario St. Capitol Site, Cebu City.

The 39 municipalities were represented by 22 mayors and 29 vice mayors, and one provincial government representative.

Local Governments in region VII, led by the Governor and all the Mayors of cities and municipalities of Cebu, made that pledge at an event organized by the League of Municipalities of the Philippines-Cebu Chapter and co-organized by the Vice- Mayors’ League of the Philippines-Cebu Chapter Province of Cebu, the Senate of the Philippines, the Office of Civil Defense-Region 7, Plan International and UNISDR.

“I laud the leaders of cities and municipalities in Region VII signing on to this campaign, and encourage those not yet participating, to make climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction part of their agenda,” said Senator Loren Legarda, UNISDR Asia Pacific Regional Champion for Disaster Risk Reduction.

“The year 2011 started with thousands of our people already suffering from the effects of continuous rains in Visayas and Mindanao. As we are in the midst of La Niña, we are likely to experience heavier and more constant rain and intense typhoons in the next days and months. The UN campaign will help us become more prepared when disasters occur,” she added.

UNISDR launched the worldwide campaign last May, enlisting local government leaders and citizens to sign-up to the Ten Essential actions to reduce disaster risks. The actions include investing more in disaster risk reduction, preparing and sharing risk assessments, ensuring early warning systems are in place, and protecting ecosystems to reduce floods, cyclones and storm surge impacts.

“Investing in risk reduction is not just an investment to serve your constituents but also a way of benefitting future generations,” said Michael Joseph Diamond, Country Director of Plan Philippines, a non-governmental organization that promotes child rights for ending child poverty.

Plan Philippines has engaged in disaster reduction and climate change adaptation with local government units and their communities in different parts of the country through programmes focused on children, since they are the most vulnerable during disasters. “Many things are possible to reduce disaster risks at local levels,” explained Mr. Diamond. “This includes simple participation of everyone in risk assessments and planning, regular coastal and river clean up, waster management, tree planting, early warning and emergency preparedness.

“The world has begun taking notice of the important role of provinces and states in fighting global warming,” said Gwen Garcia, Governor of Cebu Province in the Philippines. “I am committed to addressing the devastating effect of climate change on our environment and our economy.”

“This is done by creating a healthier environment and building green economies, and also by helping to create resilient cities and municipalities that make Cebu sustainable and vibrant,” Ms. Garcia added.

More than 150 cities have already joined the UNISDR World Disaster Reduction Campaign and are committed to complying with one or more of the Ten Essentials. Among them are Mexico City (Mexico), Durban (South Africa), Bogota (Colombia), Port-au-Prince (Haiti), Amman, (Jordan), Albay (the Philippines), Cairns (Australia), Chennai City (India), Colombo (Sri Lanka), Dhaka (Bangladesh), Kathmandu (Nepal) and Saint Louis (Senegal).

“The real battle against climate risks take place at community level. Cities and municipalities are in the front lines,” said Vice Mayor Al Arquilano of San Francisco, Cebu, who was named the newest Campaign Champion at the signing event. “To win the battle against disasters, it is important to empower our communities to do their share. As we all know, reducing disaster risks is everybody’s business.”

Notes for Editors:

- For more information on the World Disaster Reduction Campaign 2010-2011 - *Making Cities Resilient: My city is getting ready*, visit: <http://www.unisdr.org/campaign>
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