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PRESS RELEASE

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Over one hundred Municipal Leaders in Orissa pledge to strengthen environmental sustainability

Bhubaneswar, India – Some 102 Municipal leaders in the State of Orissa battling with recurrent cyclones, floods, droughts and heat waves agreed today to make their cities more resilient to multiple hazards, by signing up to the UNISDR “*Making Cities Resilient*” campaign. Orissa, despite being one of the poorest states in India, is slowly becoming the hub for industries, IT, education and medical infrastructure.

Local leaders commit to monitoring building construction by-laws, raising awareness on the need to safeguard the environment, and enhancing school and hospital safety, in a ceremony spearheaded by the Mayor of Bhubaneswar in Orissa, India, Mr. Ananta Nayarayan Jena under the leadership of the Honorable Chief Minister of Orissa, Mr. Naveen Pattnaik, in partnership with the City Managers' Association Orissa and the Local Governance Network.

Orissa has been teetering from one extreme weather condition to another: from heat waves to cyclones, and from drought to floods. Since 1965, these calamities have not only become more frequent, they have struck areas that have never experienced such conditions before. A heat wave killed around 2,200 people in 1998 -- most of the casualties were from coastal Orissa, a region known for its moderate climate.

In 1999, a cyclone passing through Orissa left 20,000 people dead including 20 million people homeless, 5 million farmers out of work and hectares of cropland destroyed amounting to a total loss of £1.5 Billion. Events like these had led the State to establish a Disaster Management Authority and to revise building practices.

“My city just cannot be resilient until my counterparts in this region join,” said Mayor Ananta Narayan Jena who first signed on to the campaign at the Shanghai Forum held in November 2010. “So, this is first step we are taking together to better protect our citizens and make our cities a better place to live.”

“This is a small beginning with a great positive effect,” said Sanjib Kumar Mishra, Joint Secretary to the Government of Orissa, who was present at the ceremony.

UNISDR launched the worldwide disaster reduction campaign in May 2010, enlisting local government leaders to commit to ten essential actions to reduce disaster risks. These 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.

Cities and municipalities all over the world have joined the 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).

For information on the campaign in Orissa contact: Dr. Piyush Ranjan Rout, Executive Director, Local Government Network & City Managers Association, piyush.rout@gmail.com or +91 9437176717.

For more information about the campaign, visit: www.unisdr.org/campaign and www.preventionweb.net