

PRESS RELEASE

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WORLD HABITAT DAY: OVER 800 CITIES JOIN RESILIENCE CAMPAIGN TO FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE

GENEVA, October 3 - The UN Disaster Risk Reduction Office, UNISDR, today announced that 841 cities and municipalities around the world, representing hundreds of millions of urban dwellers, are now active participants in the World Disaster Reduction Campaign “*Making Cities Resilient*” which was launched over a year ago.

UNISDR Chief, Margareta Wahlström, in a statement to mark World Habitat Day, said: “Mayors and municipal leaders are on the frontline in the fight against climate change and disasters. More are joining the World Disaster Reduction Campaign every week. Cities today are bursting at the seams and they are both an opportunity for economies of scale which will reduce the impact of climate change, and a challenge because of the rapid pace of urbanization.

“UNISDR’s 2011 Global Assessment Report draws attention to the fact that, since 1989, in nationally reported disasters in 21 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America the following public infrastructure was damaged or destroyed: 63,667 schools, 4,873 health facilities, 73,000 kilometres of road, 3,605 municipal water systems, 4,400 sewer systems and 6,980 power installations.

“This level of losses is clearly unacceptable. Public investment is vitally important especially for the welfare of low-income households and communities already facing a deficit of services and infrastructure.

“Loss of life and economic losses from disasters are increasingly an urban phenomenon and protecting built environments must be a priority for the 21st century as the population of the planet reaches seven billion and over half of us now live in cities. Over the last 40 years the average number exposed to floods every year increased from 32.5 to 69.4 million annually. Global physical exposure to tropical cyclones tripled between 1970 and 2010.

“Cities are inevitably going to experience more major disasters in this century and many of these will be triggered or intensified by climate change. Governments and the private sector need to act now to reduce risk because a failure to reduce foreseeable risk will accelerate economic losses.

“Social demand for investment in disaster risk reduction is going to grow and UNISDR continues to lay out the evidence for all to see why disaster risk reduction is the only defence against unacceptable losses in the face of predictable events.”

About UNISDR

UNISDR is the UN office dedicated to disaster risk reduction. It is led by the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction and supports implementation of the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters* which has been adopted by 168 countries and seeks “the substantial reduction of disaster losses, in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries.” Over 130 countries now report on their disaster risk reduction efforts. The biennial Third Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction took place in May 2011 and was opened by the UN Secretary General. It attracted several Heads of State and over 2,600 delegates representing 168 governments, 25 inter-governmental organizations, 65 NGOs and other ISDR partners. UNISDR has facilitated the creation of 38 National Disaster Data Bases around the world as part of its on-going global effort to lead and convince governments and the private sector to invest in risk reduction and avoid recurrent disaster losses which waste development resources. It has also mobilised over 800 cities and local governments to take part in the World Disaster Risk Reduction Campaign, *Making Cities Resilient: My City is Getting Ready!* In early 2011, UNISDR supported the initiative by the President of the UN General Assembly to organize the first thematic debate on disaster risk reduction ever held in the UN General Assembly.

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