

## PRESS RELEASE

UNISDR 2011/27  
5 October 2011

### UNISDR HEAD CALLS FOR “QUANTUM LEAP” IN APPROACH TO RECURRING FLOODS IN PAKISTAN

**GENEVA, 5 October 2011** – The Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction, Margareta Wahlström, arrives on a three-day visit to Pakistan tomorrow (October 6) during which she will meet with President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, the National Disaster Management Authority, Meteorological Department officials and aid donors, to discuss future risk reduction measures as the country tries to cope with floods which have displaced an estimated 5.4 million people.

In a statement prior to her departure, Wahlström said: “Flood risk in Pakistan can be modelled with great accuracy as UNISDR and others have demonstrated. Just as last year, this year’s flooding has been concentrated in rural areas with rapidly growing populations which lack early warning systems and preparedness measures. We now need a quantum leap in disaster risk reduction across all the country’s flood-prone provinces by all the actors.

“The rising economic and human toll from floods in Pakistan and elsewhere in Asia is cause for great concern. Yet we all know that these floods are signposted long before their arrival. They are annual events heralded by the monsoon rains from June to September each year. If you know what to expect then adequate preparedness measures should pay off and save lives, homes and livelihoods.”

Wahlström said she was following up on an earlier visit in February this year when lack of investment in disaster risk reduction and flood reconstruction were critical issues in a country still trying to recover from floods last year which affected 20 million people.

“We know that a lot of positive steps were taken after last year’s floods. Dykes were repaired. River beds were shored up. There were restrictions on returning to dangerous river-side locations. Homes were built on higher ground and an effort is being made to train key officials in basic preparedness.

“The Pakistan Red Crescent and NGOs are putting community-based disaster preparedness at the centre of disaster recovery but the whole effort needs to be multiplied to an unprecedented scale if we are to avoid these scenes again next year. I look forward to discussing what can be done with Government ministers and the National Disaster Management Authority.”

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## **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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