

## PRESS RELEASE

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### LEBANON PUTS ARMY AND CIVIL SERVICE ON FRONT LINE OF RISK REDUCTION

**BEIRUT/GENEVA, 21 October 2011** – UNISDR Chief, Margareta Wahlstrom, today welcomed the news that both the Lebanese Army and the National Institute of Administration, the country's civil service, are to make disaster risk reduction a core element of staff training.

She said: "This is a welcome signal from the new government of the importance it attaches to putting in place a culture of risk reduction in a country which has experienced much conflict and is also very vulnerable to earthquakes and other natural hazards. Soldiers and civil servants who understand the principles and practice of disaster risk reduction will be a very valuable resource to the country. UNISDR will be very happy to support these initiatives."

Following a series of meetings with Prime Minister, Najib Makati, the Army Chief of Staff, General Walid Salman, Lebanese government ministers and senior officials, UNISDR Chief, Margareta Wahlstrom, said today: "The new government understands the importance of putting in place the mechanisms for dealing with a high degree of risk from earthquakes and other hazards. Lebanon is one of the most heavily urbanized countries in the world and disaster risk reduction should be at the top of the government's list of priorities."

She also praised the participation of 57 Lebanese cities and towns in the global UNISDR "Making Cities Resilient" campaign when she opened a two-day workshop in Beirut for 96 local government leaders to discuss disaster risk reduction. The meeting was also attended by representatives from Istanbul, Turkey, and Aqaba, Jordan.

She added: "Lebanon is moving ahead with the establishment of a National Disaster Response Plan which will be finalized next month. Just as importantly, it is about to join an elite of 38 other nations who have shown how seriously they take disaster risk reduction by establishing a national disaster loss data base.

"It is impossible to realize the full value of risk reduction if you cannot measure your losses and calculate how exposed your economic infrastructure is to natural hazards such as earthquakes, floods, forest fires and landslides which are major hazards facing the country.

"The United Nations Development Programme is playing a critical role in supporting the work of disaster risk reduction throughout the country working closely with partners in local government, the NGO sector and the Lebanese Red Cross.

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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 Loss 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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