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PRESS RELEASE

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MANY CHILDREN DYING AND JOBS BEING LOST IN ASIAN FLOODS SAYS UNISDR

BANGKOK, 21 October 2011 – The floods which have affected eight million people across South East Asia, and which now threaten Bangkok, have underlined shortcomings in disaster risk reduction with many children drowning because they cannot swim, and thousands of workers now unemployed because of poorly located manufacturing plants, the Head of the UN’s Bangkok Office for Disaster Reduction, UNISDR, Jerry Velasquez said today.

He continued: “We are particularly concerned to learn about the high numbers of children dying in these floods which was a concern raised by children themselves when over 600 were interviewed for the new Children’s Charter on Disaster Risk Reduction which was the focus of International Disaster Reduction Day on October 13.”

Over 200 children are reported to have died in Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand out of an estimated total of 745 flood-related deaths. And more than 3000 schools have also been affected in Thailand alone which will have long term consequences on the education of thousands of children.

“UNISDR is also urging the governments of the affected countries to open discussions with the private sector on what adjustments need to be made in their land use to locate their factories in disaster proof areas to better protect their workers and prevent them to build their home in unsafe areas. The private sector has a responsibility in reducing disaster risks when these events are now so predictable in the light of what we know about the impact of climate change on the frequency and intensity of these types of disasters.”

Across the region the well-being of millions will be drastically affected by loss of livelihoods as manufacturing plants are forced to shut and agriculture struggle to recover.

“These floods map exactly onto models for a one-in-a-hundred-years event, and things could get worse in the future. If we know where the floods are going to happen and how high they are going to be, then we should be better prepared,” said Velasquez.

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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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