TURKISH EARTHQUAKE PUTS BUILDING PRACTICES IN THE SPOTLIGHT SAYS UNISDR

GENEVA, 24 October 2011 – The tragic loss of life in yesterday’s earthquake in the Ercis region of Turkey and the reported collapse of almost 1,000 buildings underlines the importance of providing the right incentives and information to builders and owners in the world’s most dangerous earthquake zones, says UNISDR, the UN office for disaster reduction.

UNISDR CHIEF, Margareta Wahlström, said today: “Turkey’s seismic code provides the basis for safer structures and better urban planning. The country has made progress in Istanbul and elsewhere in retrofitting and rebuilding public buildings, schools and hospitals to the required standard. There has been vigorous prosecution of corrupt municipal officials for allowing unlicensed construction.

“However, recent studies show that much needs to be done not just to enforce building codes but to ensure that owners have both the incentives and information to build well. Building well is not always more expensive but it is important to ensure the quality of the building materials.

“Despite any rebuilding or retrofitting and enforcement of standards for new construction, it is clear that in most earthquake zones there are large existing stocks of poor quality buildings so preparedness measures are essential. The Turkish government response has been fast and efficient with the dispatch of over 1,500 search, rescue and health personnel to the affected areas with impressive logistical support.”

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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.

*For more information about UNISDR visit: [www.unisdr.org](http://www.unisdr.org)*

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