



United Nations
International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

For more information
Please contact:
Denis McClean
Media Relations
Tel: +41 22 917 8897
Mobile: +41 79 217 3357
mccleand@un.org
www.unisdr.org

PRESS RELEASE

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PHILIPPINES TRAGEDY UNDERLINES NEED FOR IMPROVED RISK MANAGEMENT

GENEVA, 19 December 2011 – The UN Secretary General’s Special Representative on Disaster Risk Reduction, Margareta Wahlström, today extended her sympathy to the people of Mindanao in the Philippines, following the great loss of life resulting from Typhoon Sendong.

The UNISDR Chief, Wahlström, said: “There are many lessons to be learned about risk management from this tragedy. The first is that more must be done to ensure early warning systems are effective in an age when climate change is intensifying the impact of typhoons. The storm was identified two days before flash floods swept through Cagayan de Oro City and Illigan City. More must be done to educate people on disasters and climate change so they understand the risk they run when they refuse to heed warnings and do not evacuate on time.

“The second is to understand the deadly cocktail of exposure and vulnerability created by poverty, rapid urbanization and deforestation which results in huge loss of life, homes and hard-won development gains when a storm of this magnitude strikes. The proportion of the world’s population exposed to typhoons and cyclones has almost tripled in the last 30 years and disaster management is not keeping pace.”

Philippines Senator, Loren Legarda, UNISDR Disaster Risk Reduction Champion for Asia, called on local governments throughout the country to invest “in flood infrastructure, including river embankments, pumping stations, flood walls, drainage systems, storm drains, canals and flood retention areas.”

She said: “We have to take note that the high number of casualties caused by Typhoon Sendong could be due to lack of awareness of the risk and proper action of residents in affected areas, as they have not experienced floods of such magnitude in the past. Thus, information dissemination and community disaster preparedness is also a crucial part in this effort, because an educated populace would be prepared and know what to do in times of disaster.”

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 1,000 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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