



PRESS RELEASE

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UNISDR CHIEF COMPARES TYPHOON DAMAGE IN MINDINAO TO JAPANESE TSUNAMI

MANILA/GENEVA, 27 January 2012 – The UN Secretary General’s Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, Margareta Wahlström, met today with the Philippines Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Albert F. Del Rosario, following a three-day visit to the typhoon-devastated coastal cities of Iligan and Cagayan de Oro in Mindinao.

Ms. Wahlström told Secretary Del Rosario: “What I have seen in Kalakala in Cagayan de Oro reminds me of the impacts made by major tsunamis such as the one which hit Japan last year or the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004. In Kalakala you really feel the magnitude of the disaster and the force of the water which took so many lives, uprooted trees and swept away houses.”

She discussed with Secretary Del Rosario the need for social mobilisation to be linked to early flood warnings to ensure timely evacuations. They also discussed the combination of environmental factors which contributed to the disaster including illegal logging; the need to develop risk-sensitive comprehensive land use plans and the need for greater cooperation between the public and private sectors to reduce risk.

Typhoon Sendong claimed 1,430 lives after it struck in the middle of the night on December 16, making it the second most deadly disaster of the last twelve months. The Philippines topped the disaster league table last year with 33 major reported events, twelve more than China, and affecting 12.5% of the population.

Special Representative Wahlström said: “The Philippines has a very sophisticated disaster response system and it has the capacity to be a world-leader in disaster risk reduction. I am confident the government will act on the lessons learned from Typhoon Sendong to ensure better coordination and improved dissemination of early warnings as well as implementing existing legislation on land use and deforestation. The UN system will be fully engaged in helping the country in the recovery phase.”

Ms. Wahlström who also heads UNISDR, the UN office for disaster risk reduction, met with representatives of UN agencies, NGOs, Churches and 20 local mayors during her field trip.

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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