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UNISDR CHIEF WELCOMES WMO BOOST FOR EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS

GENEVA, 2 February 2012 – The UN Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, Margareta Wahlström, today welcomed the announcement that the World Meteorological Organization’s (WMO) new Weather and Climate Information System has become operational “as a major contribution towards life-saving efforts at community level.”

She said: “This is a significant boost for disaster risk reduction and will have many practical benefits for communities which suffer from weather-related disasters. For the first time, national disaster management offices and other responders will have free and direct access in real-time to weather observations and forecasts including tsunami alerts, tropical cyclone and storm warnings. Time and information save lives and this will make early warning systems more effective.”

The new WMO Information System uses the latest telecommunications technology to allow users from outside the meteorological community to benefit from the Global Telecommunications System of WMO’s World Weather Watch which is at the centre of meteorological information exchange.

Over 200 million people are affected each year by weather-related disasters such as floods, storms, drought and heat waves. Early warnings of major weather systems are vital to disaster preparedness and timely evacuations.

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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