



United Nations
International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

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PRESS RELEASE

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TSUNAMI ALERT SYSTEM TRIED AND TESTED BY PHILIPPINES EARTHQUAKE

GENEVA, 7 February 2012 – The UN Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, Margareta Wahlström, today extended her sympathy to the people of the Philippines on the tragic loss of life in yesterday's earthquake. Over 50 people are reported to have died in the earthquake which was followed by over 150 aftershocks, and landslides in several places.

She also commented on the Philippines National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council's rapid response to the year's first significant threat of a tsunami.

Ms. Wahlström, the head of UNISDR, the UN's office for disaster risk reduction, said: "A tsunami alert was issued 42 minutes after yesterday's 6.9 magnitude earthquake amidst reports of unusual sea-level changes in the coastal areas of Negros and Cebu islands.

"The alert was cancelled after two hours but the preparedness measures were well-executed, evacuations took place accompanied by information drives and it is clear that lessons are being applied from previous experiences of tsunamis in the Pacific Ocean."

She added: "This earthquake, following so quickly after Typhoon Sendong, underlines the fact that the Philippines has to manage the risk associated with multiple natural hazards. The widespread damage to critical infrastructure such as bridges, schools and hospitals highlights the importance of UNISDR's collaboration with the government especially on the creation of a national disaster loss data base which help guide public and private investment in risk reduction," said the UNISDR Chief.

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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