

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**FIRST INTERNATIONAL RISK AWARD GOES TO PROTECTION OF  
VULNERABLE TOWNSHIPS IN MOZAMBIQUE**

**GENEVA, 27 August, 2012** – The flood-prone coastal city of Beira in Mozambique was named today as the winner of the first RISK Award, a collaboration between UNISDR, the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Munich Re Foundation and the Global Risk Forum, Davos. The €100,000 prize for project implementation is funded through the Munich Re Foundation.

The 450,000 people of Beira are extremely vulnerable to floods, especially those occurring at night with little warning in townships built up to ten metres below sea level. The city has won the RISK award with a proposal to implement a flood warning system based on digital contact sensors activated by rising water levels and a system of well-trained Disaster Risk Reduction Committees.

UNISDR Chief, Margareta Wahlström, congratulated the Mayor of Beira, Daviz Samango, Mozambique's National Disaster Management Institute and the city's development cooperation partner German International Cooperation (GIZ).

Ms. Wahlström said: "The focus of this first RISK Award is on early warning in urban areas. 38 project proposals were received from around the world which illustrates that there is a growing awareness of the need to protect the urban environment against more extreme weather events and climate change. Flooding disrupts the lives of over 106 million people every year.

"This technology has already been tried and tested but most importantly it is being put at the disposal of six Disaster Risk Reduction Committees in the townships of Beira which will receive training in people-centred early warning systems. Once it has proven successful in the townships of Chipangara and Chota, it can be replicated elsewhere."

Thomas Loster, Chairman of the Munich Re Foundation, said: "Beira is a worthy winner of this first RISK Award. Successful risk management begins at the local level and we want to encourage innovative approaches to building resilience and reducing risk.

"We are confident that this project can be replicated in other places around the world such as Mindanao in the Philippines where over 1,200 people died in the middle of the night last December as they were taken unawares by rising flood waters. This is the type of needless tragedy which can be avoided through the smart use of technology and people-centred early warning systems."

**ENDS**

**About UNISDR:** UNISDR is the UN Office for 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 seeks “the substantial reduction of disaster losses, in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries.”

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