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AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL GETS UN RECOGNITION AS A ROLE MODEL CITY FOR DISASTER MANAGEMENT

World Urban Forum, NAPLES, 4 September, 2012 – Flash floods, bush fires, severe thunderstorms and even snowfalls have resulted in the Australian capital, Canberra, developing organization and coordination mechanisms for disaster risk reduction which have led to it being recognized today by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) as a Role Model for other cities to follow.

UNISDR Chief and UN Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, Margareta Wahlström, said: “UNISDR is pleased to welcome the government of the Australian Capital Territory and Canberra as a Role Model for the ‘Making Cities Resilient’ Campaign which now has over 1,000 members worldwide. Canberra has shown us how important organizational capacity is when it comes to building resilience against a wide range of natural hazards in the most disaster-prone region of the world.”

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) government introduced the Emergencies Act 2004 after the destructive bushfires of January 2003 thus providing the legislative basis for protecting and preserving life, property and the environment which has given rise to several initiatives including a comprehensive anti-bushfire programme.

The city’s Strategic Bushfire Management Plan includes community education and awareness, construction and upgrading of water points, helicopter landing pads, fuel breaks, infrastructure to facilitate grazing and prescribed burning for fuel management. The ACT government has established over 50 Community Fire Units in high bushfire risk areas providing residents with training, equipment and support. The government is also focussed on reducing carbon emissions and implementing the National Disaster Resilience Framework.

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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 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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