

Press release

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BANGLADESH TRAGEDY UNDERLINES HOW DEFICIENT BUILDING CODES CAN FUEL DISASTERS SAYS UNISDR

25 April 2013, GENEVA – The Head of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), Margareta Wahlström, today extended condolences to the families of those who have lost loved ones in the collapse of an eight-storey building in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and reiterated that Dhaka is also in a high risk earthquake zone.

In meetings last year in Dhaka, Ms. Wahlström urged Government ministers to update the National Building Code and strengthen its implementation to minimize casualties in view of the fact that over 40 million people in Bangladesh live in seismic zones.

She said today: “As we know from earthquakes, buildings kill more people than anything else. Bangladesh is a role model for many countries working to reduce deaths and losses from disasters and is a world leader in disaster risk reduction. The country has done excellent work in reducing mortality from cyclones and is poised to do an equally thorough job when it comes to updating the National Building Code and enforcing its implementation.

“The rapid pace of urbanization around the world means that sub-standard construction work is not just a problem in Bangladesh. We know that many governments are challenged by the task of ensuring adherence to land-use regulations and building codes. More people are living in seismic zones than ever before. We will have over six billion people living in urban areas by mid-century, up from around 3.5 billion people today. We can prevent many tragedies if we invest with care in new urban developments and public safety while raising awareness and commitment by citizens, business communities as well as the construction industry.”

The Bangladesh capital, Dhaka, along with Barishal, Jamalpur and Sylhet have all joined UNISDR’s Making Cities Resilient Campaign and are committed to implementing the campaign’s Ten Essential actions to build resilience including better land use and adherence to strong building codes.

“Building Resilience into Urban Planning and Investments” will be one of the featured events at the UNISDR-organized Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction in Geneva next month. The Global Platform which opens on Tuesday, May 21, will be attended by 3,000 participants.

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.”