

Press release

17 September 2014 – UNISDR 2014/21

Arab States seek action on drought and food security

17 September 2014, SHARM-EL-SHEIKH – The 19 Arab States meeting in Sharm-El-Sheikh, Egypt, this week have made a sweeping series of recommendations for inclusion in the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction which will be adopted next March in Sendai, Japan, at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction.

The Sharm-El-Sheikh declaration calls for a strong focus on water and food security, the effects of climate change and extreme weather events, including drought, on dry lands and arid zones which are home to two billion people around the world.

The Head of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, Margareta Wahlström, said: “The Arab States are giving strong support to ensuring that reducing disaster risk is seen as a cross-cutting issue for the post-2015 development agenda including new agreements on climate change and sustainable development goals. There is also a welcome move to ensure that specific attention is paid to engaging women, children and youth, people living with disabilities and older persons in the work of disaster risk management. A focus on capacity building for all segments of society has been evident in discussions here throughout the week.”

Ms. Wahlström said she strongly welcomed the commitment to develop and strengthen early warning systems across the region and to focus on scientific research and mobilize Arab scientists in support of disaster risk reduction. She extended her thanks to the League of Arab States, the Egyptian government and the Governorate of South Sinai for hosting the 2nd Arab Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction which concluded yesterday.

The final declaration recalls that only 14.5% of the total area of the Arab region is arable because of water scarcity, desertification and land degradation. Between 1980 and 2008, more than 37 million people have been affected by drought, earthquakes, floods and storms, and economic losses have been in the range of \$20 billion.

Rapid urbanization, environmental degradation, water scarcity and migration trends are all recognized as drivers of risk across the region alongside conflicts and turmoil in the Arab region.