

## Press release

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# UN LAUNCHES CALL FOR SAFE SCHOOLS ON 10<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF PAKISTAN EARTHQUAKE

**08 October 2015, GENEVA** – The head of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), Margareta Wahlström, today marked the anniversary of the 7.8 Pakistan earthquake which killed 19,000 schoolchildren and their teachers with a call for more countries to join the new Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools.

Ms. Wahlström said: “Today we remember all 87,000 people who lost their lives in Pakistan on October 8, 2005 and our thoughts are particularly with those who lost children in that tragedy which occurred at 8.50 a.m. not long after the school day had begun. A school should be second only to the family home as the safest place on earth for a child.

“In some of the world’s most dangerous seismic zones where either building codes do not exist or compliance is not enforced, schools have the potential to become graveyards for children and teachers. Earthquakes kill more people than any other natural hazard. This is an issue that must be a rallying point in disaster risk reduction for all actors including the public and private sectors.

Ms. Wahlström who chaired a Safe Schools meeting for 25 countries in Tehran this week, said: “The Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools can provide expertise to countries that need it from leaders such as Turkey and Iran who are working to ensure that all schools in their earthquake zones are retrofitted or demolished and reconstructed, in the case of Turkey by 2018, and Iran by 2020.

“The important thing for others is to make a start and join this initiative which was launched at the request of governments that adopted the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction at a UN World Conference in Japan in March this year.”

**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 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 which seeks “the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses, in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries.”