

## Press release **EMBARGOED UNTIL 03:00 GMT**

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### **ZIKA AND EBOLA SHOW NEED FOR GREATER FOCUS ON HEALTH IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

**10 March 2016, BANGKOK/GENEVA** – The UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and the World Health Organization today issued a joint appeal for national disaster management agencies to develop their preparedness and response capacities to include health emergencies alongside earthquakes, floods and storms as a top priority.

The head of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, Mr. Robert Glasser, said today: “Events such as the Ebola epidemic in west Africa and the Zika virus outbreak underline how important it is to break down the silos in disaster management. It is time that we adopt a multi-hazard approach which includes both man-made and natural hazards and associated environmental, technological and biological hazards.

“It is understandable that there is a strong disaster management focus on earthquakes and extreme weather events which affect over 100 million people every year but this machinery must also be ready for deployment in public health emergencies where the trigger is a virus like Zika.”

Speaking at a press briefing before the opening of the International Conference on the Implementation of the Health Aspects of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, hosted by the Royal Thai Government, Mr. Glasser said that Thailand was well-placed as chair of the G77, to advocate for health as a key issue in building resilience to disasters. The Sendai Framework is the global plan for reducing disaster risk and disaster losses adopted by UN Member States in March, 2015.

Dr. Bruce Aylward, Executive Director a.i., Outbreaks and Health Emergencies, World Health Organization, said: “The Sendai Framework is a valuable instrument for ensuring better health outcomes in disasters. It emphasizes the need for resilient health systems and the integration of disaster risk management into health care provision at all levels. Its implementation will help break down silos that do exist between disaster managers and health workers. It will also help to shift the focus from disaster response and management to preparedness, surveillance and disaster risk management in the health context.”

**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.”

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