

Press release

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UN: MEXICO EARTHQUAKE UNDERLINES IMPORTANCE OF STRICT BUILDING CODES TO ENSURE SAFE SCHOOLS AND BUILDINGS

Geneva, 22 September 2017 – The UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, Mr. Robert Glasser, today expressed his sincere condolences to the people and government of Mexico on the tragic loss of life from the September 19 earthquake.

Mr. Glasser said: "The Mexican people, the national civil protection agency, the Red Cross and other entities have reacted with enormous resilience and fortitude to this tragic disaster which has claimed so many lives, left many injured or unaccounted for. On behalf of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction I would like to extend my sincere condolences to the people of the country.

"This latest seismic tragedy underlines once more the truth that it is not earthquakes which kill people but buildings. Even in Mexico City with its remarkable early warning system, and strict building and land use codes put in place following the 1985 earthquake, this remains a major challenge.

"We have all been moved by the desperate search for survivors particularly in the ruins of the Enrique Rebsámen school in Mexico City. The UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction hereby renews its call for support to the Worldwide Initiative on Safe Schools which aims to avoid the repetition of earlier tragedies around the world which have seen thousands of children, students and teachers killed in earthquakes while sitting at their desks.

"UNISDR would like to see other countries vulnerable to seismic activity joining Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, Italy, Mexico and Turkey in commitments to make all schools safe in the near future. It is painstaking work that requires significant financial commitment but it makes for more resilient societies and protects future generations."

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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 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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