

Press release

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AMERICAN INDUSTRY LAUNCHES UN BACKED NETWORK TO BUILD RESILIENCE TO DISASTERS

GENEVA, 13 October 2017 – Private sector representatives from key American companies met yesterday in Miami, Florida, to start a US chapter of a UN-backed global initiative to create greater understanding of disaster risk in the business community, to safeguard future investments and reduce economic losses from disasters.

Hosted by the Extreme Events Institute at Florida International University, ARISE-USA was launched with a significant presence from the construction and insurance industries. Among those present were representatives from AECOM, RMS, FM Global, CH2M, Titan America and DRI.

A key mover behind the initiative is former Titan America CEO, author and 9/11 survivor, Mr. Aris Papadopoulos, who said: "The number of multi-billion dollar disasters has increased dramatically in the United States in recent months. This must be a cause of deep concern to the business community as many of these events can be prevented if we invest wisely in strategies which reduce disaster risk.

"There is nothing natural about these disasters. The built environment is often not fit for purpose to withstand natural hazards such as floods, storms, earthquakes and wildfires. A lot can be achieved if we improve and implement land use and building codes. We need to sensitise the consumer and the business community to these realities."

The newly elected Chair of ARISE-USA, Mr. Dales, Senior Vice President with the CH2M engineering firm, said: "ARISE-USA supports implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the global plan to reduce disaster losses adopted two years ago by UN Member States. The Sendai Framework recognizes the key role of the private sector in building resilience and reducing damage to critical infrastructure."

Vice-Chair of ARISE-USA, Ms. Chloe Demrovsky, President of Disaster Recovery International (DRI), said: "We need to see the business community taking account of disaster risk before investing in new projects and avoiding the creation of disaster risk through lack of foresight or understanding of what creates disaster risk."

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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Mr. Robert Glasser, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, welcomed the initiative and said: "Today is International Day for Disaster Reduction and there can rarely have been a more opportune moment than now to inaugurate ARISE USA, an alliance which will engage the private sector wholeheartedly in an effort to reduce the escalating cost of disasters to the American people, including lost lives, lost homes and lost jobs.

"The resilience and fortitude of the American private sector have been put under tremendous strain by a series of extreme weather events including Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria and Nate, drought and wildfires, which directly affect business performance and undermine longer-term competitiveness and sustainability."

The global ARISE network was launched by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) in 2015 and has over 140 member companies active in over 150 countries. There are country chapters established in Canada, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Japan, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and the Philippines.

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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 *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."

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