



United Nations
International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
Secretariat, Geneva

For more information
please contact:

Brigitte Leoni
Media Relations
Tel: +41 22 917 8897
leonib@un.org
www.unisdr.org

PRESS RELEASE

UNISDR 2010/19
21 September 2010

UNISDR says tackling urban risk will help reduce poverty, at the launch of the IFRC's World Disasters Report 2010

Geneva -- Tackling urban risk is everybody's business -- from national to local governments, community groups, professional associations and the international community -- and will help reduce poverty, said Helena Molin Valdés, Deputy Director of UNISDR. She made those comments in Nairobi at the global launch of the World Disasters Report 2010, published by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

"Urbanization can be a positive thing, but when cities are badly governed, risks can increase. This can put thousands of people's lives in danger," said Ms. Molin Valdés. "With little institutional capacity or political commitment to improve the urban environment, poor people who lack services remain at high risk of floods, landslides and epidemics. This is particularly true of the poorest of the poor who live in slums and informal settlements."

She said UNISDR worked with IFRC in the report's production and launch, as part of the editorial advisory board. The publication's focus on urban risk coincides with the theme of the World Disaster Reduction Campaign "*Making cities resilient- My city is getting ready!*" which was launched by UNISDR and partners last May in Bonn, Germany.

The report was launched against the backdrop of the 46th Congress of the International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP), where UNISDR organized a panel discussion with planners and UN-HABITAT on disaster management and post-disaster plans in cities.

The Deputy Mayor of Kabul -- whose city has signed on to the "Ten Essentials" of the *Making cities Resilient* campaign -- discussed the challenges faced by his city in terms of growth, water and sanitation, traffic risks and informal settlements, while expressing hope that disaster risk reduction initiatives could offer solutions. Meanwhile, members of ISOCARP said they aimed to contribute know-how to improve planning practices, which could lead to innovations to help cities become more resilient.

Given the number of big disasters that had befallen cities this year, UNISDR also stresses the importance of risk-sensitive investments. For example, the earthquake that struck Port-au-Prince on 12 January shows the extent to which urban settlements are vulnerable to disasters. Schools and

hospitals that were built with international assistance turned into death traps for the local people, indicating that investments in development need to be risk-adverse.

According to the report, 2.57 billion urban dwellers living in low- and middle-income nations are exposed to unacceptable levels of risk fuelled by rapid urbanization, poor local governance, population growth and poor health services.

To learn more, please see:

http://www.ifrc.org/publicat/wdr2010/index.asp?navid=09_03

<http://www.unisdr.org/english/campaigns/campaign2010-2011/>

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