

PRESS RELEASE

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PAKISTAN PRESIDENT TELLS UNISDR HE WILL CHAMPION DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

GENEVA, 7 October 2011 – The Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction, Margareta Wahlström, met today for the first time with Pakistan's President, Asif Ali Zadari, to discuss how Pakistan responds to "the new normal" in dealing with floods which have inundated the country for two successive years.

President Zadari agreed to step up efforts to improve early warning in his country. "Pakistan wants to be safe, resilient and able to respond to any type of disaster. We want to take ownership of disaster risk reduction and to empower our people to be able to respond to the risks and threats posed by natural hazards," he said.

President Zadari added that he would personally "champion the process of disaster risk reduction."

Wahlström who heads UNISDR, the UN's disaster risk reduction office, welcomed President Zadari's statement and responded: "The first priority in the short term for the government is to strengthen the early warning and preparedness capacity at provincial and district level. Early warning systems work when people are educated about how to respond to them. Global risk is best reduced at local level. This is the only way to minimize losses and save more lives."

The UNISDR head said that good lessons could be learned from other nations in the region who had to contend with disasters on a similar scale. She also promised that the UN would be prepared to assist with the training of officials at local level to improve flood management.

The United Nations Central Emergency Fund has allocated \$17.5 million for urgent assistance to five million families affected by the current floods. The Pakistan Floods 2011 Rapid Response Plan which has asked for \$357 million is only 15% funded and the UN allocation is the single largest contribution so far.

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 has been adopted by 168 countries and seeks “the substantial reduction of disaster losses, in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries.” Over 130 countries now report on their disaster risk reduction efforts. The biennial Third Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction took place in May 2011 and was opened by the UN Secretary General. It attracted several Heads of State and over 2,600 delegates representing 168 governments, 25 inter-governmental organizations, 65 NGOs and other ISDR partners. UNISDR has facilitated the creation of 38 National Disaster Data Bases around the world as part of its on-going global effort to lead and convince governments and the private sector to invest in risk reduction and avoid recurrent disaster losses which waste development resources. It has also mobilised over 800 cities and local governments to take part in the World Disaster Risk Reduction Campaign, *Making Cities Resilient: My City is Getting Ready!* In early 2011, UNISDR supported the initiative by the President of the UN General Assembly to organize the first thematic debate on disaster risk reduction ever held in the UN General Assembly.

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