

Press release

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GOVERNMENT MINISTERS CALL FOR SUPPORT TO DISASTER-PROOF SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS AT GLOBAL PLATFORM

22 May 2013, GENEVA – Representatives from 35 governments who met with business executives and senior experts at the 4th Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, have issued a call “to develop nationally agreed standards for hazard risk assessments especially of critical infrastructure (including schools, health centers, electricity and water supply systems, nodal ITC centres, road and transport systems) by 2015.”

The call comes in a communique made public today by the UN Deputy Secretary-General, Jan Eliasson, following a High-Level Meeting which took place yesterday in the wake of revelations from the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction that economic losses from disasters are in the range of \$2.5 trillion so far this century. The High-Level Dialogue was moderated by Tarja Halonen, former President of Finland.

The UN Deputy Secretary-General, Jan Eliasson, said: “Who can forget the shocking fact that 97% of the schools in Port-au-Prince collapsed in the 2010 earthquake? It is of huge concern that the lives and education of millions of children living in seismic zones and flood plains around the world are at risk. Over the last ten years, earthquakes and tsunamis have killed almost 700,000 people, the majority of them children. Economic losses are also a deep concern.

“We have agreed today to support a global safe schools and safe health structures campaign in disaster-prone areas with voluntary funding and commitments to be announced at the World Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015. From national level data collected from governments by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction we know that thousands of schools and health centres are damaged or destroyed in disasters each year. Hazard risk assessments are essential before investing in critical infrastructure which can lead to loss of lives if not disaster-proof.”

Martin Dahinden, Director-General of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and Chair of the Global Platform, said: “We believe that disaster risk reduction is essential to global efforts at poverty reduction and to achieve sustainable development. We have agreed to advocate for disaster risk reduction and the building of resilience to be a central part of the post-2015 development agenda together with mitigation and adaptation to climate change. All of

which will be supported by a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction when the current Hyogo Framework for Action comes to a conclusion.”

In addition to a campaign to start a global safe schools and safe health structures campaign in disaster-prone areas, the High-Level communiqué called on the private sector to integrate disaster risk in its risk management practices and for collaboration between the public and private sectors at local and national levels in risk management.

The following 35 countries were represented at the High-Level Dialogue: Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, China, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Fiji, Gabon, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Maldives, Morocco, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Saint Lucia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam.

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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