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UN unveils campaign to make cities more resistant to disasters



Margareta Wahlström, Assistant Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction

27 May 2010 – With the recent wave of natural hazards – from the devastating January earthquake in Haiti to volcanic eruptions in Iceland wreaking havoc with air travel in Europe – exposing the need for cities to implement disaster reduction plans, the United Nations is launching a campaign to boost the resiliency of urban areas.

The two-year scheme, called *Making Cities Resilient: My City is Getting Ready*, calls on leaders and local governments to commit to a 10-point checklist.

“A resilient city and its citizens can benefit greatly from the opportunities presented by urban risk reduction actions,” said Margareta Wahlström, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Disaster Reduction.

“When successfully mobilized, resilient cities may benefit from growth and employment, business opportunities, balanced ecosystems, better health and improved education,” she added.

The campaign, to be launched in Bonn, Germany, on Sunday, seeks to bring more than 1,000 local government leaders around the world to step up their investment in urban planning; infrastructure and building safety; reinforcing drainage systems to reduce flooding; and installing early warning systems, among other measures.

The mayors of five cities – Bonn; Mexico City, Mexico; Saint Louis, Senegal; Karlstad, Sweden; Larreynaga-Malpaisillo, Nicaragua; and Albay, Philippines – will be the first to commit to at least one of the checklist’s 10 points.

“It is fundamental that we as local leaders are conscious about the risks,” said Enrique Gomez Toruño, Mayor of Larreynaga-Malpaisillo. “We learned a lot during the recent influenza epidemics and before that from Hurricane Mitch, floods and landslides. We learned we have to invest more time, more capacities to reduce our risks.”

The new campaign also urges community groups, planners, academics, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector to join efforts to enhance the resiliency of cities.

“Urban risk reduction is an opportunity that cities and their populations cannot afford to miss,” Ms. Wahlström said.

The Secretariat of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction ([ISDR](#)) is coordinating the initiative, with the UN Human Settlements Programme ([UN-HABITAT](#)), the UN World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) and the UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) also playing a key role.

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