

Pakistani cities join UN-led campaign on disaster preparedness



Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction Margareta Wahlström

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More than 30 cities in seven provinces across Pakistan have joined a United-Nations-led disaster preparedness campaign intended to make urban areas resilient and ready to cope with catastrophic events to reduce losses and damage.

Many of the Pakistani cities signing up to the ‘Making Cities Resilient’ campaign spearheaded by the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) on Saturday are still under water from the recent floods, while others are recovering from last year’s massive deluge.

The signing ceremony took place in Islamabad during the country’s National Disaster Awareness Day, commemorated at the Secretariat of Prime Minister, Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, with Margareta Wahlström, the head of UNISDR, and other senior Pakistani officials attending.

Zafar Qadir, the chair of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) said the launch of the campaign in Pakistan would give impetus to efforts to improve disaster management systems and make cities safe, resilient and habitable in the wake of disasters.

“There will be no major global achievements in disaster risk reduction if we do not invest more in local actions,” [said](#) Ms. Wahlström. She called for more decentralized disaster management at the lowest administrative levels.

“We encourage mayors and local authorities to join the movement so more people will be safer from disasters in the future,” she said.

Cities joining the campaign include Karachi, Muzaffarabad, Dadu, Ghari Khairo, Tharparkar, Nowshera, Mngora, Charsada, Oghi, Dera Ismail Khan, Loralai, Khudahr, and Ghizar.

They all agreed to commit to the “Ten Essentials” of the campaign, including allocating a budget for disaster risk reduction and protecting ecosystems and natural buffers zones to mitigate the effects of floods, storm surges and other hazards.

The cities also made commitments to the “One Million Safe Schools and Hospitals” initiative, which encourages strengthening the safety of schools and hospitals from all types of natural hazards.

“Schools and hospitals are vital when disasters happen as they need to continue functioning when catastrophes hit. There is no small investment when it comes to these two types of infrastructure – they are crucial,” said Ms. Wahlström.

Some 870 cities and local governments across the world have joined the campaign and more than 138,000 institutions have pledged support for the safe schools and hospitals initiative.

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