

## UN celebrates disaster preparedness of Australian capital city



Margareta Wahlström, Assistant Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction. UN Photo/JC Mellwaine

4 September 2012 – The capital of Australia has been recognized as one of a group of global cities serving as role models in disaster risk management, the United Nations office tasked with disaster risk reduction announced today.

Due to its exposure to natural hazards such as flash floods, bush fires, severe thunderstorms and snowfalls, the city of Canberra developed the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan – an extensive organization and coordination mechanism to mitigate the city's risk from calamities.

Speaking at the Sixth Session of the World Urban Forum, held in Naples, Italy, the head of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction ([UNISDR](#)), Margareta Wahlström, praised

Canberra's disaster risk reduction efforts and welcomed the city as an official Role Model for the 'Making Cities Resilient Campaign' – a UN-sponsored initiative which aims to reduce urban risks from climate-related disasters.

A series of devastating bushfires in January 2003 prompted the Australian Capital Territory – in which the city of Canberra is located – to initiate the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan, which includes community education and awareness, construction and upgrading of water points, helicopter landing pads, fuel breaks, infrastructure to facilitate grazing and prescribed burning for fuel management.

The initiative also established over 50 Community Fire Units in high bushfire risk areas providing residents with training, equipment and support.

“Canberra has shown us how important organizational capacity is when it comes to building resilience against a wide range of natural hazards in the most disaster-prone region of the world,” Ms. Wahlström said, adding that the 'Making Cities Resilient Campaign' now boasted over 1,000 members worldwide.

There are currently 25 partners working with UNISDR to support the campaign, which seeks to give cities a forum to share their experiences and expertise, especially given that risks are on the upswing due to increases in weather-related disasters.

One partner, the Local Governments for Sustainability, counts a global membership of over 1,200 cities, towns, counties, and their associations.

The World Urban Forum was established by the UN to examine one of the most pressing problems facing the world today: rapid urbanization and its impact on communities, cities, economies, climate change and policies.

Held every two years, the Forum brings together a wide range of participants from around the world to discuss key urban challenges. The main theme of the Sixth Forum, in Naples, is 'The Urban Future.'

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