



PRESS RELEASE

MORE THAN HALF WORLD'S LARGE CITIES AT EARTHQUAKE RISK

UN-Habitat presents city solutions at the Fourth Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction Conference – Tuesday 21 to Thursday 23 May 2013, Geneva, Switzerland.

*More than half of the world's large cities, with populations ranging from 2 to 15 million, are located in areas of high earthquake risk. Rapid urbanization will increase exposure to natural hazards, especially in coastal zones. Since the year 2000, **deaths related to natural hazards have exceeded 1.1 million; and over 2.7 billion people have been affected.** Another concern is the economic impact of disasters. **Over the last 12 years USD 1.3 trillion** has been lost to disasters. The trend is rising and now exceeds, on average, USD 100 million per year over the last decade. Chronic exposure to the impact of crises erodes development gains, diminishes resilience, and returns recovering economies to poverty, **inequality, and reduced social cohesion and trust.***

Featured events

Building Safer and Resilient Cities and Settlements - Tuesday 21 May

The cost of urban disasters during 2011 alone is estimated at over \$380 billion. The largest impacts were felt in Christchurch, New Zealand; Sendai in Japan, and Bangkok in Thailand. The social and economic costs on these cities were not only felt within the immediate areas, but also nationally and globally. Experience shows that urban settlements and their capacity to withstand and recover from disasters vary considerably. With 50 percent of the world's population already in cities and substantial urban population increases projected over the coming decades, there is a need for new approaches that strengthen the capacity of local administrations and citizens to better protect human, economic and natural assets of our towns and cities.

UNISDR and UN-Habitat with partners such as United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), Marsh and partners of the Making Cities Resilient Campaign will focus on establishing clear standards, city resilience profiles and a menu of tools for cities. Such profiles will be developed through multi stakeholder input. The aim is for cities to be measurably more resilient. The side event will bring together cities, national governments and the private sector to discuss strategies and build safer and resilient urban settlements.

High Level Mayors' Lunch "City Perspectives Towards Resilience – Scaling Up Local Action", Wednesday 22 May

The luncheon to be convened by the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Dr. Joan Clos is aimed at increasing the commitment for action and sharing of experience by Making Cities Campaign Cities and Champions; and defining priorities from local government and cities to inform the post-2015 Hyogo Framework for Action.

"Cities and local governments need to increase their capacity to reduce both the damage and the recovery period from any potential disaster," said Dr. Joan Clos, Executive Director of UN-Habitat

Urban Resilience: From Advocacy to Implementation - Wednesday 22 May

In an urbanising world, a number of recent catastrophic events have shown stronger impact in urban areas. There is an increasing trend that more urban population will be affected by natural disasters over the next several decades.

[Facts: population in large cities exposed to cyclones will increase from 310 to 680 million between 2000 and 2050, and urban population exposed in areas with a significant probability of a major earthquake will increase from 370 to 870 million during the same period.]

[Fact: More than half of the world's large cities, with populations ranging from 2 to 15 million, are located in areas of high earthquake risk. Rapid urbanization will increase exposure to natural hazards, especially in coastal zones. Since the year 2000, deaths related to natural hazards have exceeded 1.1 million; and over 2.7 billion people have been affected. Another concern is the economic impact of disasters. Over the last 12 years USD 1.3 trillion has been lost to disasters. The trend is rising and now exceeds, on average, USD 100 million per year over the last decade. Chronic exposure to the impact of crises erodes development gains, diminishes resilience, and returns recovering economies to poverty, inequality, and reduced social cohesion and trust.]

UN-Habitat has committed to supporting cities and local governments to build resilience; operationally, through its Strategic Policy on Human Settlements in Crisis and Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction Framework, institutionally by creating a new Branch, dedicated to DRR and resilience, and a global work programme mainstreaming outputs on DRR and resilience. The on-going City Resilience Profiling Programme (CRPP) will also contribute to this by developing tools for measuring and profiling resilience in all human settlements, and to all types of hazards - to protect development gains, and to inform comprehensive, integrated urban planning, management and development programmes.

Building Resilience into Urban Planning and Investments – Thursday 23 May

One major factor defining the resilience of a city or urban area is the exposure of people and assets to different hazards and risk; the higher concentration of people and economic activities make location of essence. To address this, sound urban planning and design has a key role to play. But how do policy makers, politicians, planners and developers adhere to risk reducing urban planning principles? What are the incentives to better plan for resilience?

While planning requires vision, participation, appropriate knowledge and information on current and future risks, the implementation that provides for safe and basic services to all urban dwellers require political leadership and decisions. This is one of today's major challenges in rapid urbanization all around the world.

The event aims to explore the gap between technical solutions for sound urban planning and design, and political decisions and governance by showcasing experiences from mayors as well as urban practitioners and private developers.

For more information please visit www.unhabitat.org; the Global Platform website at <http://www.preventionweb.net/globalplatform/2013/home> or contact Flossie Mbiri on *** or Jeanette Elsworth on +254 723 268 135 or email advocacy@unhabitat.org