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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Philippines reconfirms its commitment to safe schools and hospitals**

Manila – In the wake of recent floods and landslides in the Philippines, which have affected close to 600,000 people, the Philippine Government today reconfirmed their commitment to make schools and hospitals in Philippine cities safer from disasters.

The commitment, led by the Secretary of Education and Health, follows the pledge by the previous Philippine Government in 2009 to make more than 60,000 schools and health facilities in the Philippines safer from disasters.

At a ceremony at East Rembo Elementary School in Makati City, this commitment was supported by 20 Metro Manila Mayors who also signed up to make their local government units safer from disasters during the Manila launch of the UNISDR “Making Cities Resilient: My City Is Getting Ready!” Campaign.

The organizer of the event, Sen. Loren Legarda said she will commit a significant portion of her P200-million Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) under the 2011 budget bill for the construction of “green and safe schools.” Legarda, chairman of the Senate committee on climate change, said she wants to prioritize the long-standing problem of lack of classrooms and school buildings. “We want to build not just school buildings, but green schools that are disaster-resilient. Aside from being structurally safe and organizationally prepared for disasters, we want these schools to be innovative and environment-friendly by putting up rainwater catchment systems, growing vegetable gardens, using renewable energy and setting up a recycling program, among others,” she said.

“With 20 typhoons visiting the Philippines every year, even though we have ongoing programmes to improve school safety already in place, it is good to engage the students, teachers, and the community, as this work is a shared responsibility of all,” said Education Secretary Br. Armin Luistro.

The 2009 tropical storm “Ondoy” (international name Ketsana) caused P73.870 million in damages to schools, with Metro Manila absorbing more than P35 million worth of damages to 42 primary and secondary schools.

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The One Million Safe Schools and Hospitals Campaign encourages an individual, a family, a community, an organization, a government, a business or any other entity to make a pledge for a school or hospital and make them safer now to survive disasters. Since its launch in April 2010 in the Philippines, more than 80,000 schools and hospitals have been pledged for safety worldwide. (<http://www.safe-schools-hospitals.net/>).

This initiative is part of the Resilient Cities Global Campaign of UNISDR for 2010 and 2011, and builds upon the 2006-2007 Global Campaign on Safe Schools, and the 2008-2009 Global Campaign on Safe Hospitals. Since its launch in May 2010, more than 300 cities have already joined the UNISDR World Disaster Reduction Campaign and are committed to complying with one or more of the Ten Essentials. Among them are Mexico City (Mexico), Durban (South Africa), Bogota (Colombia), Port-au-Prince (Haiti), Amman, (Jordan), Albay (the Philippines), Cairns (Australia), Chennai City (India), Colombo (Sri Lanka), Dhaka (Bangladesh), Kathmandu (Nepal) and Saint Louis (Senegal). More information can be obtained from the website: <http://www.unisdr.org/campaign>