

## Press release

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### UNISDR PRAISES GENEVA'S FLOOD MANAGEMENT

**06 May 2015, GENEVA** – The head of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, Margareta Wahlström, today praised Geneva for its management of the exceptional floodwaters which have threatened the city in recent days following torrential rain in the French Alps. Geneva is home to UNISDR and 40 other UN agencies.

The river Arve which joins the river Rhone in Geneva, increased its flow from 90m<sup>3</sup> per second to 900m<sup>3</sup> per second putting the emergency services on alert and forcing a number of evacuations and road closures. While there has been some disruption, overall the disaster risk was reduced by several years of careful management and maintenance of the river and lake systems in both Switzerland and France.

Ms. Wahlström said: “It is good to know that the city which hosts the United Nations Office at Geneva and several large UN agencies, can be considered a role model when it comes to flood management. Floods affect more people every year than any other disaster type and need to be managed pro-actively to avoid loss of life and economic damage.

“Over the last few days the cantonal authorities and city of Geneva, les Services Industriels, Service cantonal de l'ecologie, and the Direction générale de l'eau have managed the risk with great skill. Good maintenance of the river beds, updated hazard maps, forward response planning, closure of key bridges and roads, and good communication with the public, have all ensured that a major calamity was avoided. The flow of water from Lac Lemman into the Rhone has been well managed to allow free passage to the Arve. Many flood situations require trans-national cooperation and it is good to see France and Switzerland cooperating closely on this issue of flood management.”

**About UNISDR:** UNISDR is the UN office dedicated to disaster risk reduction. It is led by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and supports implementation of the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters* which seeks “the substantial reduction of disaster losses, in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries.”

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