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Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality complete Major Earthquake Master Plan Study

Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (“IMM”) has been engaged in the development of an “**Earthquake Master Plan**” for the city in an effort to reduce potential losses from a future large earthquake event that scientists agree has a fairly high probability of occurrence within the next several years. The Earthquake Master Plan will serve as the principal internal guide for all earthquake risk management actions undertaken by IMM. In this context, IMM has contracted with the four leading universities in Turkey to undertake a comprehensive study and to develop the elements of the Master Plan and an approach for its implementation. A Turkish version report summarizing the methodology, findings, and recommendations from this study has been submitted by the investigators from the four universities to IMM on 7 July 2003. An English version of the report was completed on 1 November 2003. During Dr. Bendimerad’s visit to Istanbul (26-31 October 2003), IMM officials provided copies of both reports to EMI.

Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality has been a partner of EMI since 1999. EMI worked closely with the authorities of IMM to help them develop capacity for managing the earthquake risk to the city. In particular, IMM adopted the concept of Earthquake Master Plan after working with EMI’s experts for the period of August 1999 to September 2000. Following the formal adoption of the concept of Master Plan by the Istanbul authorities, funds were allocated to undertake the subject study.

The Earthquake Master Plan study involved a multi-disciplinary team of more than 40 of the leading earth scientists, social scientists, engineers, urban planners, and other specialists from Turkey’s four leading institutions of Bogazi University, Istanbul Technical University, Middle East Technical University and Yildiz University. The collaborative effort lasted more than a year. The investigators provided an in-depth assessment of the current situation, and identified and investigated several elements related to the Master Plan, including Seismic Risk Assessment, Urban Planning, Information Infrastructure, Education, Social Environment, and Disaster Management. The current earthquake risk factors and the aftermath of the 1999 earthquake are also well documented in the report. The Turkish version of the report exceeds 1300 pages. The study complements a scenario and vulnerability study recently completed for the city under funding from the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The Master Plan study is a far reaching benchmark study, which has never been accomplished to this extent in Turkey, and probably not in the World before. It is a major contribution to the effort of earthquake risk reduction in this city of more than 10 million people.

At the request of IMM, EMI will be heading a multi-disciplinary group of international experts to perform a peer review of the study in order to further improve its contribution and also benefit from experience from other countries. Also, EMI is participating in discussion between the World Bank and the Government of Turkey in the development of a major earthquake risk reduction program for Istanbul that includes many aspects of the Master Plan (see separate news article here).

The cooperation between EMI and IMM has been an example of trust and collaboration. Thanks to this cooperation and to an unshaken determination by IMM officials, significant progress has been accomplished in earthquake risk reduction for Istanbul. A pilot project for the implementation of the Master Plan has already been launched by IMM for the district of

Zitunburnu, which counts more than 16,000 buildings and a daytime population of about 400,000 people. Such a large-scale earthquake risk reduction effort is unparalleled in the world. EMI considers the success of the Earthquake Master Plan as a critical endeavor not only for Istanbul but also for many other megacities that are prone to earthquake. EMI is determined to continue working closely with the leadership of IMM and other Turkish and international interested organizations in supporting the implementation of the city's earthquake risk reduction agenda.

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