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World experts call for action on seismic risks for schoolchildren: OECD report.

Schoolchildren in many countries face unacceptable risks of injury and loss of life due to the faulty design and construction of school buildings which collapse in the event of earthquakes or other disasters, according to 30 world-renowned experts brought together by the OECD and U.S.-based non-profit organisation GeoHazards International. A new OECD publication sets out the problem and makes recommendations for improving earthquake safety in schools.

Tragedies occur because available technology is not applied and existing laws and regulations are not sufficiently enforced, *Keeping Schools Safe in Earthquakes* finds. The design and construction of schools could be improved quickly and at reasonable cost to significantly lower the seismic risk to schools and help prevent further injury and death,

Keeping Schools Safe in Earthquakes contains 18 reports from experts in 12 countries. Their recommendations will be presented to 2 400 specialists in seismic structural engineering at the World Conference on Earthquake Engineering (WCEE) from 1 - 6 August at the Vancouver Convention and Exhibition Centre in Vancouver, Canada, and to the OECD's governing Council for consideration by member countries later this year.

A news conference with five of the experts who took part in the OECD meeting -- GeoHazards president Brian Tucker, Wilfred Iwan from the California Institute of Technology, Mauro Dolce of the University of Basilicata in Italy, Carlos Ventura of the University of British Columbia, and Robin Spence of Cambridge University in the U.K. -- will be held at the WCEE conference in Vancouver on Tuesday 3 August 2004 at 12.30 p.m.

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