

## **Experts' Meeting on Earthquake Safety in Schools**

An "Experts' Meeting on Earthquake Safety in Schools", organized by GeoHazards International (GHI) and the OECD Programme on Educational Building (PEB) took place from 9 - 11 February in Paris. <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/55/56/22741287.pdf>

The meeting included presentations and group discussions organized around six themes:

- Acknowledging the importance of improving seismic safety in schools
- Recognizing the obstacles to achieving seismic safety in schools
- Defining seismic safety principles for schools
- Assessing vulnerability and risks to schools and educational systems
- Identifying strategies and program approaches for improving school seismic safety
- Taking an initial step toward achieving seismic safety in schools

A report on meeting outcomes will be distributed to the Minister/Secretaries of Education of OECD member countries on March 18, and presented to the OECD Committee on Education in May. Salient points of the report include:

- Schools collapse due to avoidable mistakes in construction.
- New earthquake-resistant schools can be built at affordable costs and existing unsafe schools can be made safe for a small percent of the total construction/retrofitting cost.
- It is unconscionable to build unsafe schools and unconscionable for countries to ignore their own building codes.
- Using international technical support, the OECD should evaluate and help improve the programs of its member states to design and construct safe schools.
- Greater loss of life of schoolchildren in earthquake disasters due to unsafe schools will occur in the future unless steps to improve school seismic safety are taken immediately.

OECD attention to the Report can lead to policy changes that affect building codes and code enforcement within the member countries, thus setting a global example for improved earthquake safety in schools.