



International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

Reducing Vulnerability to Disasters in South Eastern Europe 8th March 2011 Rome, Italy

This meeting showed the engagement and strong commitment of South Eastern European countries to the issue of Disaster Risk Reduction through the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: 'Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disaster'.

Such engagement has been embraced at the political level through the organization of Ministerial Conferences, such as the South Eastern European Cooperation Process Ministerial and Experts Meeting on Disaster and Emergency Management held in Turkey in May 2010 and the 12th Ministerial Session of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement, held in St Petersburg in September 2010.

This commitment of South Eastern Europe to the issue of Disaster Risk Reduction has been further enhanced and supported by a number of regional programmes, such as the South East Europe Disaster Risk Mitigation and Adaptation Programme (SEEDRMAP), developed by the World Bank and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), in collaboration with the European Commission and with other regional and UN partners, and the programmes implemented or envisaged for implementation under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance Multi-beneficiary (IPA MB), such as the "Regional Programme on Disaster Risk Reduction in South-East Europe" (IPA MB 2008) and "Building Resilience to Disasters in Western Balkans and Turkey" (IPA MB 2011).

In this context, three thematic areas were discussed:

- *Risk Transfer: Mitigating the Adverse Financial Effects of Natural Hazards on the Economies of South Eastern Europe*
- *Cities, Schools and Hospitals Safety (ISDR Making Cities Resilient: "My city is getting ready" Campaign)*
- *Governance in Risk Reduction and National Coordination.*

Risk Transfer: Mitigating the Adverse Financial Effects of Natural Hazards on the Economies of SEE.

The Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility for South Eastern Europe and Caucasus (SEEC CRIF), i.e. regional risk transfer and insurance mechanism, has been developed by the countries of the region and the World Bank, with support of Global Fund for Disaster Risk Reduction (GFDRR) and UNISDR, and was presented at March 8, 2011 Rome Workshop. The example of Albania as

a first country that joined the SEEC CRIF has reaffirmed the added value of such initiatives and facilities. Through the presentation of the Director General of the Association of Italian Insurers (ANIA), the meeting discussed and agreed on the importance of insurance to stimulate disaster prevention policy as well as the challenge in communicating the benefits of insurance to citizens, especially given the fact that natural catastrophes cost on average 0.2% of GDP per year. The example of the earthquake which struck the Abruzzo region in Italy was given. This caused damages for about 2-3 billion Euros for dwellings only, around 300 million only of which will be financed by insurance companies.

Support for promotion of the insurance and reinsurance products for disaster risk transfer among the IPA beneficiaries is already supported by the European Union under one of the IPA MB 2011 programmes, and will be provided by UNISDR in collaboration with the private sector, the World Bank and the Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CRIF). The World Bank noted that Catastrophe insurance in South Eastern Europe and Caucasus countries is nascent – around 0.5-3 % of houses, SMEs and farmers are covered against geo-hazards and weather related perils. However, further collaboration with the World Bank, UNISDR and the European Commission to address the relevance of and training on these issues to citizens is recommendable.

Cities, Schools and Hospitals Safety (ISDR Making Cities Resilient: "My city is getting ready" Campaign)

The participants felt that the implementation of Risk Reduction activities at the local level is an important dimension to be further enhanced in the region. The ISDR *Making Cities Resilient: "My city is getting ready"* Campaign provides a useful channel to develop experiences and to share these amongst different countries. Provision of support for increasing the public awareness in relation to disaster risk reduction in the Western Balkans and Turkey, including through implementation of this campaign, is already envisaged by the EU under IPA Multi Beneficiary 2011.

The presentation from the Istanbul Seismic Risk Mitigation and Preparedness Project (ISMEP) showed the importance of building resilience to disasters. 70% of the population in Turkey lives in seismic areas. In the mega city of Istanbul, retrofitting work has been completed in 413 schools whilst further reconstruction work has been completed and is ongoing in more than 100 schools.

The meeting also benefited from hearing about the experience of Serbia. In particular, Serbia illustrated the changes in the national legislation, through the adoption of the Law in Emergency Situations, which structures the emergency management system

In September 2010, a signing ceremony had been held in the town of Nis where 18 Serbian cities joined the campaign with another 60+ to be nominated.

However, given the importance of implementing Risk Reduction activities at the local level, the meeting recommended to continue addressing this dimension and to ensure, throughout the organisation of regional events, specific trainings on linking with existing networks, such as the Covenant of Mayors.

Governance in Risk Reduction and National Coordination.

Governance in Disaster Risk Reduction issues has been one of the first topics discussed in collaboration with UNISDR in the region. Since then South Eastern Europe efforts in order to increase the multi-sectoral approaches in addressing Disaster Risk Reduction have been embraced with tangible results, including the development of National Platforms in Croatia, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The governance of Disaster Risk Reduction also implies changes within the national legislative system. In this context the participants heard of the experience of Serbia in updating legislation to fully reflect the Disaster Risk Reduction agenda.. In these national efforts strong support from existing regional organizations such as EUROPA, Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative (DPPI) South Eastern Europe and UNISDR have allowed for training, possibilities of exchanges of good practices.

The meeting acknowledged the importance of the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction in further enhancing exchanges amongst National Platforms and Hyogo Framework for Action Focal Points towards improving national coordination mechanisms. South Eastern Europe has firmly embraced the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction and the work of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Croatia, Chair and Co-Chair of the 2011 Forum.

The group discussion highlighted the need for National Platforms to develop a workplan reflecting the multi-sectoral presence and its implementation. Given the importance of this issue, the meeting reaffirmed the necessity to continue addressing this topic.