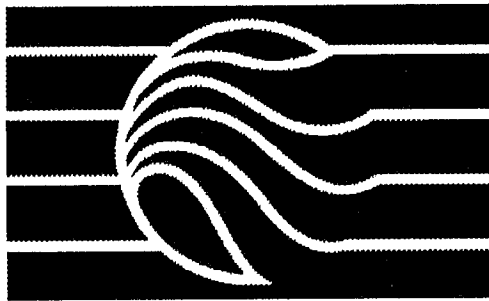


International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction



IDNDR

1990 – 2000

Building a Culture of Prevention

CZECH NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Prague, June 3, 1998

Report by the Chairman of the Committee

History of establishment

Czech NC was re-established **11.11.1997**. The reason for the re-establishment originates from the history of IDNDR activities in Czechoslovakia and, later, in the Czech Republic.

At the beginning of the Decade in 1990 the National Committee for the whole Federation – Czechoslovakia was established. The vice-chairman of the NC was Dr. Kárník from the Institute of Geophysics (Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences). NC has been very active and well managed in the Czech part by Dr. Kárník. Unfortunately, since 1993 year, when Czechoslovakia was divided into two separate states and by the coincidence, also in connection with the death of Dr. Kárník, who played the leading role in IDNDR activities, the Czech Committee had not be created after the separation.

There were several reasons for that one of them being complete rebuilding of many ministries and state administration in general – none of them wanted to be engaged in IDNDR activities. Anyway, the Czech Republic in principle underestimated IDNDR activities especially from the point of view of a potential danger from natural catastrophes. People mostly thought that such catastrophes have been occurring only in developing countries and not in the Central Europe.

Then, **floods occurring first time in 1996** in a relatively local extent but quite disastrous for a local people had been a first warning showing that anti-flood system and connected activities have not been on a proper level. The next year, 1997, the disastrous flooding damaging almost one third of the Czech Republic – northeastern part – as well as the parts of Poland, Germany and, in a lesser extent, also parts of Slovakia and Austria.

Already during the 1997 flood appeared some signals and questions mostly from neighboring countries and also from the IDNDR Secretariat in Geneva, whether does exist any IDNDR National Committee in the Czech Republic and, if so, what are the contacts, persons involved etc. Nonexistence of the NC in CR has shown to be a handicap – therefore, the **Ministry of Environment decided – together with the Ministry of Agriculture, to support a re-establishment the Czech IDNDR NC.**

Therefore, the first meeting of a new Czech IDNDR National Committee took place in November 1997 in the Czech Hydrometeorological Institute in Prague. The main goals of the new NC were directed firstly toward **preventive measures** during natural catastrophes like floods – early warning systems and secondly to **an improvement of knowledge and education** of people in villages and cities as their poor reaction during 1997 flooding might contribute to a relatively high losses of lives. Finally, NC had to take the **responsibility for international contacts** in the framework of IDNDR especially with neighboring countries. NC decided not to concentrate on meetings only but on concrete work and, especially, **on creation of projects proposals together with IDNDR NCs from neighboring countries aiming to an improvement of early warning systems as well as to finding and removing of all drawbacks and weak points in systems of protection against natural disasters.**

Activities of the Czech IDNDR National Committee

a) Organization of activities of the NC

It was quite clear from the very beginning that the NC should include various kinds of people - both specialists and managers **from different types of organizations** – governmental (ministries, state based technical organizations, etc.), public services and agencies, research institutions and universities, private sector, non-governmental organizations, media, insurance companies etc. At the same time, these people have been supposed to cover **various types of natural disasters** and institutions involved in different parts of activities connected with natural disasters. This character of composition of the Czech NC has been still under development and, therefore, the NC covers broader and broader extent of institutions and activities.

At this moment, in June 1998, **the Czech NC has got 24 members** and about **6 to 8** advisers-experts in various fields. NC includes people from the Headquarters of Civil Safety, Fire Brigade, Czech Hydrometeorological Institute, Water Department of the Ministry of Agriculture as well as the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Regional Development, State Health Institute, State Office for Nuclear Safety, Red Cross, research institutes and universities. Recently, also the Czech Association of Insurance companies became a NC member. *in various fields.* It is obvious that in the CR we cannot develop so powerful organization with many members etc. like in Germany or some other larger countries. On the other hand, we feel that it is **a good base for starting activities both on national and international scales.**

However, to be able to keep a certain continuation of activities of the NC between its meetings we have established immediately **an Executive Group (a kind of core group) consisting of 9 people**. This EG meets approximately once a month or two and co-ordinates all activities between meetings. The members are connected via e-mail (preferable), phones or by fax. **Since November 1997 EG has met three times** – each time at different place- once in the CHMI, once at the Headquarters of the Civil Safety and last time at the Headquarters of Fire Brigade of the Czech Republic. During those meetings the EG members had an opportunity to see organization and equipment at these institutions important and used during natural catastrophes and other emergency situations.

The whole NC has met twice up to now. At the last meeting of NC it has been decided to optimize the organization of NC with respect to main goals for the last period of IDNDR. Therefore, **4 working groups (WG) (each consisting of 5 to 7 people) have been created:**

- **WG on early warning**
- **WG on education and training**
- **WG on risk assessment**
- **WG dealing with hygienic and epidemiological aspects**

These WGs were created about one month ago each having a chairman. Until now we have got a very little experience with this organization. However, we feel that this simple arrangement could help to streamline activities of IDNDR in the Czech Republic.

b) Main goals and plan for 1998 year

Goals of NC IDNDR have been created on the basis of needs of the Czech Republic especially after a severe test of functioning of the whole emergency response during the catastrophic flood in 1997 as well as on the outcome of the UN Conference on Disaster Mitigation in Yokohama 1994. Main aim is directed to the promotion and strengthening sub-regional, regional and international co-operation in activities to prevent, reduce and mitigate natural and other disasters.

The first meeting of EC formulated following **main goals for the NC IDNDR:**

- Prevention both connected with elimination and decrease of damages caused by catastrophes including early warning systems.
- Co-ordination of activities and exchange of information between governmental and non-governmental bodies and organizations within the country.
- Helping to organize training and education of public in emergency situations (some foundations might be established or used for this purpose).
- Helping in organization of associations devoted to crisis management
- Co-operation with national IDNDR committees from abroad and co-ordination in preparations of international projects towards decrease of

damages from natural disasters preferably financed from international resources.

These basic goals have been taken into account during a preparation of **work plan for 1998 year:**

- Finalizing of gathering information about existing systems, instructions and publications as well as of training materials for all kind of bodies and for public.
- Classification and evaluation of those information and preparation of new materials directed to most urgent problems of warning and emergency systems in the CR.
- Activation of contacts with neighboring countries and, organization of a meeting of NCs in Prague. Contacts with the IDNDR Secretariat in Geneva should also be renewed. The Czech IDNDR should be, anyway, active and visible in the last phase of the international Decade. Some of the common measures (exchange of warnings etc.) could be achieved during this year helping to an immediate improvement of international part of the systems.
- Activities of IDNDR in Central European countries should be directed to a creation of international projects in the Region aiming to improvement of problems and bottle necks in emergency systems in each country..
- Evaluation of training materials obtained from abroad and preparation of amended and improved version for the use in the Czech territory.
- Intense preparation of existing forecasting and warning systems in the Czech Republic, preparation of some exercises and training courses and, after a careful evaluation of the results of such tests, preparation of proposals towards elimination of problems and bottle-necks in the above mentioned systems.
- Finally, to improve an organization of NC activities as well as to find a financial support of the NC secretariat and administrative part of the organization from the government.

Even though **the renewed Czech NC has been working 6 months only** some activities have already been done. The Czech delegation together with delegations from some other Central European countries fostered the issue of improvement and better co-ordination of flood forecasting and warning at the Meeting of WMO Regional Association VI (Europe) in May 1998 in Israel - it ended in a creation of special coordination group for flood forecast and warning within WMO RA VI. Members of NC also participated in the process of renewal of rules of the Czech anti-flood system. In the beginning of May, the **Workshop for meteorological and hydrological forecasters**, active during 1997 disastrous flood, from Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic took place in Prague.

As **telecommunications and dissemination of warnings and signals** play a very important role in all emergency systems the Headquarters of Civil Safety, the Headquarters of Fire Brigade and the Czech Hydrometeorological institute organized testing of connections by means of

an exercise in dissemination of flood warning signals (in May 1998). NC IDNDR also supported **project for a detailed evaluation of July 1997 Flood in the Czech Republic** organized by the Ministry of Environment and coordinated by CHMI. Also many institutions re-evaluated their systems of connections by applying enough mobile phones. In any case, the members of NC have always been promoting improvements of emergency systems within their institutions and, discussions during both meetings of the whole NC or Executive Group only have been contributing to overall improvement of co-ordination among various parts and institutions of our emergency systems. Anyway, working groups have already started their work to fulfill specialized tasks derived from the plan of the whole NC.

Finally, **this meeting has also been organized to help IDNDR activities and better co-ordination within the Central European region.** Anyway, we hope that we all will be able to find some concrete and topical projects to improve our mutual co-operation and, at the same time, to improve our systems of forecasting, warnings, overall prevention as well as better education of people within our countries. It is also hoped that **the IDNDR Secretariat in Geneva can help with the realization of such projects.**