



Seul le prononcé fait foi

26 octobre 2016, Lisbonne

13<sup>e</sup> Conférence ministérielle de l'Accord européen et méditerranéen sur les risques majeurs (EUR-OPA)

Session: New interactions: making people a resilience tool

Statement by M. Dominique Lamiot, Président du Conseil de direction de la Banque de développement du Conseil de l'Europe

### **“The Importance of Implementing DRR in Building Resilient Societies”**

Distinguished delegates, dear colleagues,

It is my great pleasure to address the 13<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Session of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) having the opportunity to give a speech on such an important matter as building more disaster resilient societies in Europe and the Mediterranean region certainly is.

At the beginning let me first express both my personal gratitude and appreciation on behalf of the Sector for Emergency Management of Serbian Ministry of Interior for the invitation to take part at this high level meeting but also for choosing an issue of building resilient societies to be one of main discussion topics.

To build a resilient society especially in areas prone to certain types of disaster risks is not an easy aim to reach. This is not easy neither for countries with unlimited resources or for the countries whose capacities and capabilities are limited or insufficient. However, each country has some kind of an advantage that can be used by others. It can be its own good or bad experience or challenges and problems noticed in practice over the years.

Therefore we should use the most of this gathering to exchange our views and share experiences that changed the way we perceive the concept of resilience. In our own case it was a May 2014 flooding, a large scale disaster that significantly influenced a new perception of joint work and engagement of all national protection and rescue stakeholders, side by side with the international assistance provided. Our experience and lessons learnt put forward new methodological approach and structural changes planned for coming period, but also included the importance of close cooperation with international civil protection community.

One of the most important lessons learnt from this but also from other previous emergencies, and I am sure this is something noticed worldwide, is the fact that investing both in prevention

and in national capabilities of response to emergencies is equally significant as raising public awareness of potential consequences of natural and man-made disasters. Therefore I would like to address that Serbia is doing its best not only to enhance national response and emergency management capacities but also to implement the priorities determined by Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction, particularly the one concerning investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience.

Recent emergencies have also shown that during the unforeseen course of events most efforts were made to save the lives of most vulnerable groups of society. Elders, children, women, hospitalized people as well as people with disabilities may need additional assistance to obtain the services they need, so it is crucial to make sure that everyone is safe during an emergency. Regarding to this, one of the steps we made in cooperation with the OSCE is the publication and distribution of family guide written in several languages spoken in Serbia. The purpose of this handbook is to increase public awareness of disaster risks reduction and to help citizens to understand their civil protection role and to perform it to the best of their ability. Our intent also is to involve children as part of their learning process. In following period the plan is to prepare family guide and other relevant materials for people with disabilities. In every primary school there are posters with procedures in case of fire and now we preparing the poster with procedures for other disasters such as floods and earthquakes.

Regarding the migrant crisis that affected all Europe, Serbia provided protection and care for all migrant passing through our country particularly in providing shelters, medical care, food and clothes. Our authorities take care of their security during their stay in our country.

Once again, I would stress the importance of cooperation between the countries in dealing with large-scale disasters. This is indeed emphasized during the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, where it was concluded that we all need to change our way of thinking, now putting the accent on the disaster risk management instead of only managing response in the event of a disaster. Therefore, concerning the variable weather conditions and the evident climate change, and given the fact that we will certainly have to address increased challenges in the future, it is important to be persistent and to take every opportunity to repeat this important conclusion.

In case of Serbia, with the completion of a risk assessment for the entire territory we will define potential risks and threats to the territory of the municipalities and cities, with adequate response structure established. However, limited available funding remains a major factor in the planning and implementation of operational measures at both national and local level.

In regard to identification, evaluation and monitoring risks and strengthening of early warning systems, Serbia aims to comply with the standards and methodologies for the assessment and identification of the risks of natural and other disasters that are in line with the recommendations of the European Union. Guidance on the methodology for the development of risk assessment and plans for protection and rescue in emergency situations is harmonized with EU regulations.

In addition we are constantly improving the functioning of the protection and rescue system in cooperation with the stakeholders at the national and local level, and by connecting them with scientific and research organizations. Good cooperation with the media is also necessary in order

to promote a policy of disaster risk reduction and the availability of information to strengthen public awareness and safety culture in the field of protection and rescue.

Additionally, in order to improve regional cooperation and joint action through the exchange of information and a number of trainings, numerous protocols with neighbouring countries have been signed, that results in enhanced relationships among the competent authorities. In this sense, I hope that this conference will be another contribution to networking on broader European level and better and more efficient cooperation especially bearing in mind that since 2015 Serbia is participating state of the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

And I look forward to continuation of successful work during the session. Both to our Portuguese hosts and EUR-OPA Secretariat let me once again express my gratitude for the excellent organization of the meeting.

Thank you for your attention.