

**Obraćanje potpredsjednika Vlade i ministra unutarnjih poslova dr.  
sc. Davora Božinovića na  
14. ministarskom sastanku EUR-OPA Sporazuma, Vijeća Europe  
24. studenog 2021.**

**Intervencija u drugoj sesiji: *Developing EUR-OPA's actions to meet  
the new challenges posed by natural, technological and biological  
hazards***

Dear Minister Cabrita, dear Eduardo,

Dear colleagues,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for organising this important meeting.

It has never been more important than today, for international institutions dealing with disaster risk reduction, prevention and preparedness, to operate and encourage the exchange of information, lessons learned and advocate for disaster risk reduction in the region and beyond.

Disasters are an area where it is of utmost importance to learn from each other and to cooperate. Frequent emergencies and disasters keep reminding us of that. The last two years especially have made it clear that cooperation and sharing of information is crucial, and that sometimes it can literally save lives.

We have to be aware of the hazards surrounding us, of the risks and of the vulnerabilities of society. This is where prevention and disaster risk reduction come in – we have to know what could happen – before it does happen and be ready for it.

We had a first-hand experience. Last year in the midst of the lockdown, two devastating earthquakes struck Zagreb and central Croatia. Though an epidemic and an earthquake are two completely unrelated events not likely to happen at the same time, we still did our best to manage both emergencies.

This complex situation showed how important it was that we had established a resilient system capable of providing the optimal response after catastrophic events. This system includes well-connected institutions supported by NGOs and the scientific community as well as continuous trainings, exercises and risk assessments.

Croatia envisaged the current trends of more frequent disasters years ago. We recently reorganised the civil protection system, and disaster risk reduction is a topic we have been advocating for continuously for over 10 years since we first established the National Disaster Risk Reduction Platform.

We developed a national risk assessment, a national capability assessment and, based on these documents, this year we will adopt the first national disaster risk management strategy.

None of these would be possible without the advocacy of international organisations such as the European Union, UNDRR and EUR-OPA. Croatia has been an active member of the EUR-OPA Agreement since 2002.

The current EUR-OPA Medium-term Plan highlights all our disaster risk management priorities, both from the national and international point of view and ensures that activities are in line with the Sendai Framework that provides a broader scope. Developing strong risk-aware governance that guides and prioritises DRR investments while enhancing preparedness will help overcome many of our national and international challenges.

In situations like the one that Croatia faced last year where we had to tackle two big emergencies at the same time, we witnessed true solidarity and learned from the experience of other countries.

EUR-OPA Agreement is a showcase of a mechanism that facilitates exchanging experiences for countries with similar needs, regardless of whether we are dealing with earthquakes, pandemics, fires or floods.

Therefore, we are committed to the open partial agreement - a valuable platform for better cooperation with member countries in order to reinforce prevention capabilities. We participate in the events organised

within the framework of the Agreement, and consult relevant recommendations.

Being aware that countries in the same region are threatened by similar hazards, we are willing to share knowledge and experiences more intensely, because it is only together that we are more resilient.