

Honorable Chair,  
dear colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

first of all, allow me to congratulate and express my gratitude to the Government of Portugal for the successful organization of this important event, especially taking into account the difficult times and the problems we all face equally. As you may know, this is the very first time that Slovak republic is participating in a Ministerial Meeting of the Council of Europe's European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement since our joining of the Platform in 2018, so for me this is a particularly unique opportunity to be present in this forum and confirm our support for the Agreement's politics and actions.

Slovak Republic, like any other country, faces issues and challenges arising from global change, including, and in particular, challenges such as climate change, mobility and migration, growing globalization, instability of the world economy, deepening of disparities between rich and poor sections of the population as well as the rise of extremism. Likewise, the COVID-19 pandemic and the fight against it has been a major event in the last two years not just because of its devastating effects on individuals, families and communities, but also because it served as a demonstration of global preparedness for large-scale hazards and with them associated attack on national and international security priorities.

Without further ado, I dare to say that the following can be stated:

- climate change and other megatrends cause a significant increase of the number and size of (especially) natural disasters;
- in many disaster cases, a synergistic and / or cascading effect is manifested, the negative impact on the protected interests is increased and significant losses occur;
- the size of the losses is increased by the growing population density and the vulnerability of modern materials and technologies.

It is clear that in order to address all these challenges, it is necessary not only to identify the internal potential of each State and fully use all of its available capacities, but also use all of the possibilities of international cooperation in terms of international co-ordinated actions in all phases of disaster risk cycle. This obviously requires an integrated approach, flexibility and at the same time a clear focus on priorities and goals.

Though national as well as global security in this context must be understood as a continuous process, based on improving the abilities and skills of all stakeholders. As mentioned also amongst the priorities for action of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement's Medium-term plan 2021-2025, there is an urgent need of moving from a top-down directive role of the States to a more transversal leadership role, using a triple, eventually even a quadruple helix approach to our actions as a community. The aim is to maintain and maximize processes aimed at protecting the population, provided that sufficient information is available, in particular the information needed to actively involve citizens in prevention and preparedness through self-protection. The systems must be based on sufficient general awareness of the roles of various responsible actors, but must also be based on strengthening mutual assistance, volunteer participation, individuals and community, including greater involvement of private and research actors in security issues and on strengthening the integrated rescue services systems. In the process of development of national and local disaster risk reduction strategies and plans it is fundamental to apply the

knowledge-based instruments, taking into consideration disaster risks in their socio-economic development as well as the complex and intrinsic dynamic of risks.

The Slovak republic's approach to disaster risk management is fully aligned with its international obligations and I believe that it is safe to say that our plans and strategies that deal with prevention, preparedness, response and relief in the face of existing hazards try to apply necessary level of coherence with European as well as international policies and objectives. Our most recently prepared strategic document, the National Disaster Risk Management Strategy, that is recently under assessment, is conformed not only with major national strategies, be it the Security Strategy, Adaptation to the Climate change or Defence Strategy of the Slovak republic, but is being prepared in compliance especially with United Nations Framework Convention on climate change, Lisbon treaty and its solidarity article, the new Internal security strategy for the European union, obviously Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction or Agenda 2030. In this relation we therefore fully acknowledge and support the Council Europe's mission in this matter translated into EUR-OPA's past and ongoing activities and confirm our best intents to develop them on national level as part of our strategic documents.

We intend to support scientific and technical work to better assess and examine evolving risks and for this purpose create a Specialized centre as intended by the Agreement able to develop and bring forward collaborative projects as part of a nation-wide initiative. Using existing structures and with help of newfound ones we intend to promote more extensively the risk reduction culture among the population. Understanding the importance of intergovernmental cooperation we will continue to strengthen the existing synergies and support the collaborative actions where needed.

Thank you for the attention and I am looking forward to a fruitful exchange in the future.