

**Statement EUR-OPA Ministerial Meeting - 24 November 2021**

**Mr. Octavian BIVOL, Chief of the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, UNDRR**

Excellencies,

Dear colleagues,

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. I would like to express my appreciation to the Government of Portugal for hosting the meeting and the Council of Europe for its engagement on challenges posed by natural, technological and biological hazards and the continued collaboration with UNDRR tackling disaster risk and supporting the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in the European region.

This meeting comes at a critical time. The increasing impacts of climate change, the great devastation caused by COVID-19 adding to existing complex risk landscapes across the region demonstrate that disaster risk is interconnected, systemic and is impacting every aspect of our lives, livelihoods. Testing our capacity to recovery better, greener and more resilient.

The COVID-19 is a case in point. For the first time in 20 years, poverty is now increasing globally. The pandemic led to 97 million more people being in poverty and this trend continues this year.

This is being compounded by climate impacts which are leading to unsustainable economic losses. In the period 2000 to 2019, the major recorded disaster events resulted in approximately US\$2.97 trillion in global economic losses. This is double the losses over the previous 20 years. The severe flooding, heatwaves and extreme weather events this summer in Europe are a stark warning of the need to accelerate action to reduce risk.

And should not take our focus away from the array of disaster risk in the region, as we continue grappling with risk of different nature, including technological and other man-made risk.

Our infrastructures, our cities, our businesses or supply chains are more and more organized as complex systems which can be heavily impacted by disasters, happening in the same area, in a neighbor country or even on the other side of the planet.

That is the reason why we need to learn about this evolving risk landscape, about the cascading and compound effects of disasters for adapting to it through a transformative and proactive implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The benefits of investing in disaster risk reduction, including in early warning systems and resilient infrastructure show that investing in prevention saves lives. The number of disasters are increasing but we are saving more lives.

Looking ahead, strengthening risk governance is important. This is essential not only at the national level but also at the international and regional level.

A truly whole of government and whole of society approach is needed, driven by a clear vision and strategy for resilience. Strengthened public and private sector investments to prevent and reduce the impacts of disasters, including on critical infrastructure are important, together with enhancing cooperation and capacities for transboundary disaster risk governance.

Climate change, changing demographics and the digitalization of the economies also oblige us to assess and analyze risks as systems at local, national, and regional scales. We need data to be harmonized, standardized and interoperable. We also need to build on each other expertise, experience, systems and mechanisms.

Europe's leadership on DRR domestically, and regionally, is a cornerstone for building resilience. Strong legal foundations including treaties and institutions are vital to cope with challenges posed by natural, technological and biological hazards.

In conclusion, allow me to stress that the outcomes of this ministerial session come just as the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction hosted by Matosinhos, Portugal between 24-26 November also starts today and will be a key moment for strengthening regional collaboration. These topics will be addressed throughout its discussions and sessions, while framing the next decade of regional engagement through the EFDRR 2021-2030 Regional Roadmap.

The Roadmap is the result of a one year long consultative process including all categories of stakeholders and representatives of the region. It is another example of our capacity to work together and to scale up our efforts for building a resilient Europe and Central Asian region.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the Forum to take forward this important dialogue.

Thank you.