



**Building Resilience to Disasters in
Western Balkans and Turkey**

**UNISDR-WMO
“Building Resilience to Disasters in the Western Balkans and Turkey”
Second Steering Committee Meeting**

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Distinguished Representatives, Colleagues, Ladies and
Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be at the second Steering Committee meeting of the joint UNISDR – WMO project “*Building Resilience to Disasters in the Western Balkans and Turkey*”, supported by the European Commission, DG Enlargement, under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) and once again having the pleasure to visit this beautiful region.

I would like to thank the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Meteorological and Hydrological Service which supported this event, as well as our partner organizations WMO and

UNDP that coordinated with UNISDR the arrangements for this meeting.

The project has just reached its mid-term implementation point and looks now to its second and final year of implementation.

While the first year was intense and partially devoted in setting the planning of the activities, the second year begins when all the tasks are in full swing, with intense months of implementation ahead of us.

While I shall leave to my colleagues in the next session the presentation of the activities implemented during the first year of the project, I would like to emphasize how rich of important milestone events have been the past 12 months for this region, Europe and globally.

Since last project Steering Committee meeting other two countries in the region established a National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. This places South Eastern Europe among the few regions where almost all countries have developed a National Platform allowing for exchanges among

national actors dealing with reducing the risks of disasters. I would like to congratulate all of you for this remarkable achievement.

Your role as primary stakeholders in disaster risk management has been pivotal for this result, and I would like to recognize the contribution that our regional actors such as the European Commission, DPPI and RCC, among others, have played to support this process as well as international organizations part of the UN Country Teams which promoted DRR in their respective action plans at the national level.

At European level, your region distinguished itself for a strong commitment into international cooperation in Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation. In Skopje we organized the second session of the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction in 2011, while last year, the third session took place in Dubrovnik.

In addition, several organizations contributed through your national Hyogo Framework for Action reports to the third European Hyogo Framework for Action overview of achievements and

challenges [*countries in IPA: Albania, Croatia, Serbia, FYR of Macedonia, Turkey*] which was launched in Geneva at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction last week.

This year, the Global Platform, arrived at its 4th session, marked the last mile towards the World Disaster Reduction conference that will be held in Japan in 2015, where the successor of the Hyogo Framework for Action, will be presented.

The Global Platform brought together over 3,500 participants from 173 countries with representation from national and local governments, inter-governmental organizations, non-government organizations, mayors and parliamentarians, communities, business, academia and science. This Session has been the largest and most diverse to date, which is a sign that the outreach on disaster risk reduction is working and that many stakeholders intend to firmly stand behind it.

From this Global Platform I would like to highlight some of main action points mentioned in its draft Chair Summary:

1. **Assessing Risk:** it is a pre-condition for good governance.

Governments at national and local level shall invest more in collecting data and information in a comprehensive and comparable fashion. Knowing what is the real economic costs of disasters it is a main leverage for policy actions and appropriate investment planning in disaster prevention and risk reduction. I am pleased that in this region, Albania, Croatia, Serbia and Turkey have been among the first European countries – together with Italy and France and now Romania - to start working towards establishing a standardized national database for disaster losses and I hope that other countries will soon follow.

2. **Leading at the local level:** Rapid urbanization in areas subject to natural hazards can result in significant potential risks, but also significant opportunities to transform approaches to resilient development. Municipalities and their mayors are in a unique position to inspire and commit to action that reduces risks. At the Global Platform mayors and local representative from the region presented and discussed their challenges and achievements in

building resilient society. An important focus is ensuring that schools and hospitals are built to resilient standards.

- 3. Recognizing the private sector as actor and partner:** The private sector has a crucial role to play in preventing and reducing disaster risk. Companies are not only exposed to natural hazards, but also often contribute to increased risks while driving economic growth. There are still unexplored opportunities for public-private partnerships in this region however steps have been made towards creating partnerships in the sector of disaster insurance and re-insurance by the World Bank, UNISDR in cooperation with the Swiss Economic Cooperation Organization and the Global Environmental Facility.

These key action points emerged at the global level are, as a matter of fact, reflected in the implementation of the different tasks of the project. This confirms that what we are all doing in partnership with the European Commission addresses well the underlying drivers of disaster and climate risks.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finally, I would like to remark how much successful you and your institutions have been in these years in bringing at the highest political level the issue of disaster risk reduction in South Eastern Europe. This is also reflected by the level and the quality of the contributions at the Global Platform.

Let me stress that this is truly a major achievement to which all of us in our respective role has in these years contributed.

I look forward to the possibility of developing further synergy with all of you building on the momentum created by this high-level event.

I wish you a productive Steering Committee meeting.

Thank you.