



ADRIATIC AND IONIAN INITIATIVE
SERBIAN CHAIRMANSHIP JUNE 2011 - MAY 2012

Joint Statement

of the Ministerial Conference on the Harmonization of the Regional Activities in Prevention of the Natural and Man-made Disasters

Belgrade, 18 November 2011

We, Ministers and Heads of Delegations of the South-East European Cooperation Process Participating States, at the joint meeting with Adriatic and Ionian Initiative Participating States and representatives of the international organizations, gathered in Belgrade at the invitation of the Republic of Serbia as the Chair in Office of the South-East European Cooperation Process and the Chair in Office of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative;

Recalling the Declaration of the SEECP Ministerial Conference held in Antalya 2010; the Declaration of the SEECP Ministerial Conference held in Sofia 2008; and the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: *Building the resilience of nations and communities to disaster*, which provides the agreed international framework on disaster risk reduction;

Aware that in the South East Europe disasters can have a regional dimension and that countries share common disaster risks;

Emphasizing that in recent years the frequency and severity of disasters caused by natural hazards and man-made disasters have increased, and that the predictions are that this trend is likely to worsen in the coming years;

Acknowledging that disasters can cause severe damage threatening the safety, security and prosperity of the countries in the region and their citizens;

Recognizing that good bilateral, multilateral and regional cooperation in the field of disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery can save lives, protect social, economic and environmental assets and support the stability process and prosperity in the region;

Emphasising that States are primarily responsible for the protection of their citizens; Furthermore **stressing** the importance of a regional and international cooperation and collaboration on disaster risk reduction and disaster prevention;

Recognizing the importance of effective disaster prevention, in a changing climate context, in saving lives and protecting economic gains, environment, property and historical and cultural heritage;

We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations of the SEECP Participating States, the AII Participating States, and the representatives of the international organizations;

HAVE AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

1. Prevention and preparedness actions should be based on the existing knowledge, and on disaster loss national databases having in mind the actions already taken in the region of South East Europe. The support of the international partners should aim to complement and further strengthen national initiatives and cooperation among the States to avoid duplication and enhance the capability of the countries to reduce the risk of disasters and respond to them;
2. States should continue to share and make available best practices and lessons learnt, and exchange information, views and experience with international partners with the aim of developing a common approach to disaster and emergency management and specifically disaster risk reduction challenges within the region;
3. Development of bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation should be further strengthened; as well as the regional cooperation between the governmental organizations, civil society and scientific and academic community of the SEE countries;
4. Development of cooperation with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism which is the key structure for disaster prevention, preparedness and response in Europe in order to develop a common approach in the SEE region with a strong EU dimension;
5. States shall support their national disaster and emergency management authorities to further strengthen capacities with the aim of building community resilience to reduce the risk of disasters including preparedness, also in the framework of further enhancement of bilateral cooperation;
6. States shall use this opportunity to invite all partners from the international community involved in disaster risk reduction and emergency management to promote synergy and compatibility, thereby further enhancing regional cooperation and collaboration in this field, as well as growth and prosperity of the individuals and the communities;
7. We welcome continuation of further intensive involvement of the European Union with the candidate and potential candidate countries in the South East Europe with the emphasis on risk reduction, preparedness and response to disasters, especially in the framework of the European Union's IPA Programme on Civil Protection Cooperation for the candidate countries and potential candidates which aims to bring the countries closer to the Community Civil Protection Mechanism;
8. We stress the importance of the SEECP and the Regional Cooperation Council, providing operational capacities to and working under the political guidance of the SEECP in enhancing regional cooperation and supporting the stability, democracy and development in the South East Europe;

9. We encourage further development of the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative into an effective regional mechanism for consultation and coordination of the efforts in this area;
10. Recognizing that the risks of disasters are increasing in the South East Europe region, we are committed to find a regional approach to enhance resilience and reduce risks posed by disasters in cooperation with international organizations and donor countries;
11. We welcome the next Summit of Heads of State and Government of the South East European Cooperation Process which will be dedicated to Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation and will take place in Ohrid in 2013.
12. We thank the Serbian SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office, and AII Chairmanship-in-Office for the successful organization of this meeting.

Adopted in Belgrade, on 18 November 2011.