FROM SPITAK TO SENDAI

IF THERE WAS AWARENESS IN BABYLON...

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European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction (EFDRR) 8 October 2015, Paris, France
FROM SPITAK TO SENDAI

In 1988, the earthquake of Spitak revealed many issues related to civil protection (CP) system in Armenia and became the main impetus of radical reorganization of that system and creating of Emergency Management Administration of Government of Armenia. Now Ministry of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations is the main actor of Disaster Management in the country.
In 2011, due to its activities and creative solutions, Emergency Channel of RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situation, was recognized in European DRR Forum as a best practice. There also was decided, that Emergency Channel is the internationally recognized leader and one of the main initiators in Crisis Communication and DRR public awareness.
By the initiative of Armenian Government and Emergency Channel, towards the 25th anniversary of Spitak Earthquake, 2 large International Conferences were organized on 2-3 December of 2013 and 2014, titled “Public awareness as a cornerstone of DRR: State officials, international organizations, information responsible and journalists for resilient planet Earth.”

The conference began with welcoming remarks by RA ES Minister Armen Yeritsyan:

- Numerous analyses have been done after the Spitak earthquake, many lessons have been learned, but we all know that there were earthquakes in this land and will still be. In 1988, 137 countries of the world were on our side and I would like to take this opportunity once again to express our gratitude to all those, who lent helping hand to us. Thanks to “Emergency Channel” for its activities. There are no large and small countries for disaster risk reduction, there is information that should be available to everyone.

By ES Minister’s suggestion, the participants of the conference kept one minute’s silence in remembrance of the Spitak earthquake victims, after that Minister Armen Yeritsyan awarded the Deputy Director of OCHA’s Coordination and Response Division, Geneva, Rudolph Möller and Lieutenant Governor of Kansas Dr. Jeff Colyer with medals “Valiant Rescuer” for active participation in rescue operations during the earthquake in Spitak, on the 7th of December, in 1988.

In his speech, the Head of EU Delegation to Armenia Traian Hristea mainly mentioned:

“Most of disasters overtook people, but all of them realize that prevention and preparedness can reduce the loss. Of course, there will be less damage, if timely and reliable information is provided. It is not accidental, that EU Humanitarian Office has opened its first branch in this region. I am sure that with the help of “Emergency Channel” this conference will achieve its goals.”
Considering emergency information and communication issues as integral part of DRR in the light of post-2015 DRR developments the Conferences aimed to bring together the world best practices in the field of public awareness, emergency communications and work with journalists and to prepare final package of public awareness suggestions for DRR World Conference in Sendai 2015, Japan.
The Conference participants unanimously confirmed the fact, that Armenia is a leader in a number of many countries in performing activities directed to disaster risk reduction and public awareness, and that, the meeting was a good opportunity to exchange experience and get prepared for the UN Conference.
Representative of Armenia, hosting Information and Knowledge Management Session in Sendai, presented Armenian experience and the final package of Yerevan conferences outputs.

World International Conference on DRR approved Armenian initiative and delegated Emergency Channel to develop an International Working Group comprised of experts from different countries and organizations, under the UNISDR umbrella, which will develop Crisis Communication and DRR Public Awareness component for Hyogo 2 – Sendai.

It was mentioned, that Armenia can be the role model for other countries with its initiatives in this field, and Yerevan Conferences should become a tradition.
MEDIA FOR RESILIENT PLANET EARTH

“Mass Media and Disaster Risk Reduction”
International Conference

December 15-16
Yerevan, Armenia

Thank you for your attention