

The Council of Europe welcomes this 3rd Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction which we find an extraordinary forum for the exchange of expertise and ideas on disaster risk reduction, for the establishment of new partnerships and for the setting up or reinforcement of existing networks with governments, scientists, community leaders, international organisations and the private sector.

We have received a significant mandate from Council of Europe Heads of State and Government, who committed themselves to strengthening the security of European citizens and to supporting integrated policies in the field of prevention and management of natural disasters and technological accidents. Our main instrument in this endeavour is the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), which will shortly count 25 years of activity in disaster risk reduction.

We also particularly welcome the mid-term review of the Hyogo Framework of Action which has permitted both to check progress in how governments and societies are implementing the Framework and has introduced or underlined a number of elements (such as the increase of certain risks due to climate change) that will surely be of major importance in the years remaining before 2015. We are proud to have been associated by ISDR to this exercise.

I am equally glad to inform you that the Council of Europe has integrated all these concerns in the new Medium Term Plan 2011-2015 of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement adopted at the Ministerial Session last year in Saint Petersburg. During this Session new priorities were set for Council of Europe work, comprising a considerable number of fields in disaster risk reduction and including, what is a permanent concern for our Organisation, the improvement of governance in disaster risk reduction and a greater attention to ethical principles and human rights. As you well know, the protection of human rights and the promotion of democracy are the rule of law and the core activities of the Council of Europe.

Finally we should like to extend our gratitude to ISDR for its very active cooperation with the Council of Europe over the past years. In 2008 we signed a Memorandum of Cooperation which both Organisations willingly implement. We have been working together on a number of issues of importance for States, many of them scientific or technical, others political and particularly on improved governance for disaster risk reduction, promoting European National Platforms, their networking and striving finally to cover the gaps in governance so that citizens may benefit from a better integrated approach to disaster risk reduction.