



Regional Conference:

**Disaster Risk Reduction – Cross-border cooperation between Serbia and Bosnia
and Herzegovina**

-Conclusions and Recommendations-

Regional Conference on disaster risk reduction has gathered many stakeholders from public sector, donor community and civil society organizations that are actively involved in the field of disaster risk reduction with aim to exchange experiences and perspectives from the field and to better define the respective roles in disaster risk reduction in order to prevent duplication and overlaps of efforts and responsibilities. Regional cooperation, enhancement of the legal frameworks and importance of civil society organizations were all emphasized as pillars of all future efforts aimed at disaster risk reduction. The above stakeholders have expressed their deep satisfaction with the course of the conference and the quality of networking and exchange of experiences. With respect to that, they have recognized the following:

- 1) Natural disasters know no borders or boundaries. An efficient response to the challenge they represent demands a very high level of regional cooperation and coordination, inasmuch as legal frameworks that would facilitate overcoming of bureaucratic hurdles is concerned, but also with respect to the establishment of common procedures and other cooperation mechanisms.

In direct relation to the above, it was recognized that the whole region used to be a part of the same state in the past (Social Federative Republic of Yugoslavia), protected with the same efficient instruments of civil defence and that fact should be taken as starting point in any and all elaboration of future mechanisms of regional cooperation.

From that point onward, the recommendations from Sendai Framework should be taken as general guidelines in building said mechanisms.



- 2) One of the biggest disaster risk factors that the participants have identified is a very low level of awareness of the population in the region about the individual and collective responsibility for their environment. The causal relationship between the impacts of own attitudes towards the environment and the vulnerabilities to all types of hazards is not sufficiently understood on individual level and often even on higher levels.
- 3) Different actors involved in the field all make substantial efforts in prevention and risk reduction activities, but these efforts often suffer from lack of sufficient coordination and sometimes have very different methodologies. The consequences of these are the end results that are often complicated to gauge and compare directly.
- 4) There is no systemic response to the need of educating the population about the risks involved with natural disasters. In the Republic of Serbia little is done on education in the key period for awareness raising about disaster risk reduction issues. It is therefore crucial to continue with the activities of the cross-sectoral working group of Serbian Sector for Emergency Management on integrating the educational curricula from the field in the pre-academic education as outlined in the conclusions of Republic Headquarters for Emergency Situations from 23 February 2015.
- 5) Civil Society Organizations play an important role and contribute significantly to the field of disaster prevention and risk reduction but are insufficiently connected among themselves and not necessarily aware of other organizations' activities.

Considering the above, the Conference participants address the following Recommendations to all relevant state institutions as well as to the other active actors in the field of disaster risk reduction. These Recommendations have for objective the strengthening of regional capacities for mitigation and risk reduction connected with major disasters. The participants recommend the following:

- I. Adoption of the specific legal framework in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina that would clearly define the roles of different actors in the field of disaster prevention and risk reduction, particularly in calm periods that precede the potential calamities. This legal frameworks should provide the general guidelines for the development of regional cooperation mechanisms.
- II. Besides the mentioned legal acts from the field of disaster prevention and risk reduction, it is essential that the principles and concepts of volunteerism is accepted, understood and strengthened in both countries, along with the development of volunteerism-related legal framework. The volunteers involved in



disaster risk reduction activities need to be trained and connected and have specific knowledge about the response activities in emergency situations.

- III. Increase in the number of joint activities on strengthening the prevention capacities, through joint DRR projects of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, is essential for bringing together and rapprochement of people involved in this field. As the human is the focus of all emergency management efforts, it is crucial to establish a quality contact between people on all levels and structures involved in risk management. Joint field simulation exercises and preparedness plans tests are an advised way of establishing this matrix-based contact between people on all levels.
- IV. Elaboration and joint agreement on the main methodologies used in the system of disaster prevention and response, from the local to the national and regional level, is of outmost importance. This particularly relates to the following:
 - i. Risk assessment methodologies for the most common hazards
 - ii. Early-warning system information throughput methodology
 - iii. Curriculum of pre-school, elementary and higher-schools education in the field of disaster management.

Agreement on the methodologies is essential to ensure that all actors in the field of disaster prevention and risk reduction “speak the same language” and dispose with directly comparable results and immediately-implementable actions.

- V. Urgent inclusion of disaster risk reduction methods, emergency management and principles of civil defence in educational systems of both Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Until a separate school subject curriculum is developed, it is advised to incorporate the necessary knowledge from these fields in curricula of existing subjects (World around us, Nature and Society, Geography, etc.)
- VI. Continuous engagement of the civil society organizations on awareness-raising activities among the population of the impact of disaster prevention and risk reduction on individual and societal well-being.

The need for larger networking of the civil society organizations involved in the field is particularly emphasized, along with the need for strengthening of volunteerism principles, volunteers’ trainings and organizing of other activities that benefit society and in which young people could be more involved.