



**MESSAGE OF DR. VLADIMIR KUVSHINOV, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF
THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL DEFENCE ORGANISATION
ON THE OCCASION OF WORLD CIVIL DEFENCE DAY 2018
(1 MARCH 2018)**

“Civil Defence and the national institutions for more efficient disaster management”

Dear friends and colleagues,

The 1st of March is a very important day for all members of the world’s many national civil defence and civil protection corps. In 1990, the International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO) designated the 1st of March as World Civil Defence Day and it has been celebrated annually by a growing number of countries ever since.

The purpose of the World Civil Defence Day celebration is to promote public awareness about civil defence, civil protection and emergency management in order to better prepare the civilian population to protect itself in the event of emergency and to reduce the risk of disaster. The celebrations have a different focus each year, and the theme for 2018 is “Civil defence and the national institutions for more efficient disaster management”.

Today, given the challenging conditions of modern life, there is general agreement among all countries that disaster protection and national security are inseparably linked and that the provision of protection against natural and man-made disasters must remain a top priority in national policy to ensure the welfare and security of their people and territories. A crucial part of this policy must be to establish appropriate national legal provisions aimed at limiting disaster risks, preserving lives and reducing material losses.

International experience has shown that the best way to increase the effectiveness of disaster and emergency management is through the creation of a National Disaster Management System in each country to coordinate the activities of the local, regional and national authorities and agencies charged with prevention, mitigation and recovery.

A modern National Disaster Management System must be able to accomplish many challenging tasks: the development of legal and regulatory norms; public preparedness; event forecasting; assessment of the scale of emergency situations and the socio-economic consequences; disaster mitigation and recovery. Another central role is the development of international cooperation in the field of protection of the population and territories.

To achieve these important and complex tasks, each country should aim at creating a National Disaster Management Center to coordinate the activities of the government agencies and national and municipal services within its National Disaster Management System. Many ICDO Member States already have a National Disaster Management System in place, as well as a National Disaster Management Center, and they are functioning well. Others are currently in the process of establishing or planning their national structures.

Today, with the support of its Member States, the ICDO is making an important contribution to this work on a global scale with the creation of the World Network of Disaster Management Centers. This network will facilitate the exchange of information on evolving disaster risks and emergency situations and coordination of timely action to control or eliminate them.

The ICDO has always done its utmost to assist Member States in their efforts to create modern national civil defence structures, as well as to improve their effectiveness, to train qualified personnel and to educate civil society on the measures to take in the event of disaster. In the years to come, we will continue to rely on the broad support of Member States to achieve success in these key areas.

The increasing challenges and threats caused by climate change will undoubtedly continue to create serious obstacles for stable social and economic development throughout the 21st century. Therefore, it is the duty of all countries to take serious steps to strengthen their civil defence/civil protection structures and to improve the skills of their specialized personnel. Maintenance of a strong and effective National Disaster Management System should be seen as an integral component of national security policy and a valuable support for sustainable development at the national, regional and international levels.

Today, on the 1st of March 2018, as we celebrate World Civil Defence Day, we are not only making plans for the future; we are also remembering the victims of duty – the civil defence and civil protection personnel, firefighters and rescuers whose actions provide an enduring example of courage, patriotism and selfless service to their cause.

I would also like to thank all civil defence personnel, firefighters and rescuers worldwide for the work that you are doing to ensure the safety of the population of your countries. Thank you for your dedication and devotion to duty.



Geneva, 1 March 2018