



## CENTRE FOR SECURITY COOPERATION

International and Regional Cooperation with focus on Euro-Atlantic Integration Pillar

Regional Conference  
„FLOODS IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE – Lessons Learned and Ways Ahead“

5-6 November 2014, Sarajevo, BA

IRC-12-S



### INTRODUCTION

The recent floods in several countries of the South East European Region resulted in emergency situations which had disastrous consequences with human casualties. The stabilization of unpredicted circumstances and rehabilitation of the resulting damage is a troublesome process for the affected countries.

The majority of these situations make it impossible for the countries to get over the disasters on their own. Countries need the help of the neighboring countries and beyond as well as relevant international institutions and organizations which were established with the aim to help countries overcome these types of situations.

RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation, serving as a platform for security cooperation for the countries in the SEE Region, in close cooperation with the Ministry

of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the UNDP Office to Bosnia and Herzegovina conducted a Regional Conference: „Floods in South-Eastern Europe – Lessons Learned and Ways Ahead“. This was the first regional conference that tackled the topic of floods in SEE so far.

The aim of the Conference was to encourage national authorities of all participating countries to discuss issues, obstacles and solutions in flood mitigation, readiness for inter-institutional and cross-border cooperation as well as preparedness for harmonization of domestic laws and regulations in this area with international and EU laws and regulations.

## PURPOSES AND OBJECTIVES

The purposes of the Conference were:

- To bring together relevant and responsible officials who will exchange and share their experiences in tackling floods and their consequences; and
- To identify the lessons learned and discuss the potential solutions and the ways ahead in order to reduce the consequences of floods, by being more prepared and by organizing better protection.

The objectives of the event were:

- To specify the role and responsibilities of the relevant institutions and their staff in order to be more prepared when facing and tackling floods and their consequences; and
- To present examples of best practices needed to manage flood emergencies.

## ORGANIZATION

The event took place in Hotel Holiday, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 4-6 November 2014. It lasted two days and comprised lectures, presentations and discussions. Speakers gave presentations whose content reflected the topics of the Conference. During the panel sessions highly constructive discussions were held. The work of the sessions' moderators, Mr Samir Huseinbašić PhD, Mr Idriz Brković, Ms Marija Žužek and Mr John Martin gave impetus to the Seminar sessions initiating discussions on different aspects of the topic.



The Conference consisted of:

- The welcome addresses and introductory key notes by the heads of the co-organizing institutions (Ministry of Security of BA, RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the UNDP Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina);
- Three plenary sessions moderated by the representatives of the Ministry of Security of BA, RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation and the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- The final summary - wrap up, conclusions and recommendations.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

The event brought together 93 civil protection professionals, water management experts and decision-makers from AL, BA, HR, MK, ME, RS and SI.

The participants were mostly officials at the decision making level or came from civil protection agencies, river basins agencies, ministries relevant for water

management, ministries that cover energy and environmental issues, municipalities and towns affected most severely by floods as well as international and non-governmental organizations.



## **MEDIA COVERAGE**

The media of Bosnia and Herzegovina showed strong interest for this event.

Most of the print and electronic media covered extensively the work of the Conference with a strong focus on what would be internal and cross



border actions in flood mitigation and flood disaster reduction. In the framework of the agenda of the Conference a media opportunity was foreseen during which the co-organizers gave statements to numerous media representatives.



## SUMMARY

During the Conference issues, obstacles and solutions in flood mitigation, preparedness for and inter-institutional and cross-border cooperation and coordination in response to floods in South-Eastern Europe in the light of the domestic and international regulations and standards were discussed. The participants reviewed the key lessons to be learnt from the recent floods and the ways ahead, i.e. the internal and cross border actions in flood mitigation and flood disaster reduction.

Presentations on different topics were given by national experts on the local and national level, as well as international experts from international institutions and organizations such as the UN, EU, DPPI, etc.

“The Conference provided impetus for new initiatives and joint projects, and was a forum for discussions and exchange of views on disaster risk reduction,” said in his



opening remarks Mr Samir Agić, BA, Assistant Minister of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Mr Agić thanked local and international partners for the assistance they provided during the floods and in the recovery process.

Ambassador Jonathan Moore, Head of the OSCE Mission to BA, said: “The OSCE recognizes the important role that the environment plays in security. Our organization, therefore, made plans for the coordinated management of natural and man-made catastrophes as a commitment for all its participating States. This means that States must develop national policies that will

reduce potential disasters risks and allow them to respond in a way that will minimize damage.”

Ambassador Branimir Mandić, Director of RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation said that close cooperation and coordination in the region was necessary for both the prevention of and a successful response to natural disasters and climate change. “This is a prerequisite for the timely protection of people and their livelihoods”, he said, adding: “We need cross - border concrete cooperation and plans to ensure a rapid and efficient response to these kinds of disasters. Bureaucracy must be crossed out in situations that pose a threat. Moreover, we need to challenge our own national/state systems where we see room for improvement, because politicians do not necessarily know everything about flooding and other threats.”

Ms Amela Ćosović-Medić, UNDP Justice and Security Sector Coordinator said: "The recent floods have created momentum to build and improve on all aspects of the disaster management system in BA, including prevention, response and recovery and measures to increase resilience. It is estimated that every dollar spent on preparing for disasters saves approximately seven dollars in economic losses. The building up of stable and resilient communities is a task for all - co-ordinated efforts amongst relevant national institutions, the international community and partners across the region are of vital importance here."

A set of presentations given by experts and national presentations by the representatives of the individual countries tackled:

- regulations, guidelines, standards and tools in the area of water management and flood disaster management, flood risk reduction and protection;
- new forms of risks caused by hydro - meteorological hazards in the context of climate change;
- key lessons learned in different areas of water management and flood disaster management in each country;
- potential solutions in ways ahead to reduce the risks of floods;
- national measures and cross border cooperation and coordination when international assistance is required;
- hazards caused by floods and practical solutions (landslides, etc.);
- forms of enhanced cross-border cooperation in water management (water level regime control, early warning among countries in the same river basins).

## CONCLUSIONS

Being aware of the causes and grave consequences caused by floods in 2014 and importance of undertaking joint actions, representatives of participating public institutions, the local government, academic community, representatives of different sectors relevant for floods and international organizations taking part in this Conference have agreed that the Conference on this topic has fully justified its overall organization. Through specific presentations and discussions the following conclusions were made:



1. The problem of larger scale floods is closely connected to the river basins extended through many countries and, hence, an urgent, close and efficient regional cooperation in flood control and flood protection in the light of the EU Flood Directive is required. Therefore, the reduction of vulnerability through improvement of the waterways infrastructure connected with joint flood prevention and preparedness is of crucial importance.
2. Development of Civil Protection Mechanism capabilities (New EUCPM) in combination with climate change adaptation and environmental protection policies is also an area relevant for flood prevention and preparedness (such as harmonization of legislation, more effective and more efficient coordination, etc.) that needs to be in the focus of national efforts and regional cooperation.
3. More specific areas of cooperation regarding regional flood prevention and preparedness in the light of the EU Flood Directive and Water Framework Directive should be the following combination of measures: sector management (clusters) and coordination, flood risk assessment, flood risk mapping, flood risk communication, flood risk planning, flood control and mitigation (hydro-meteorological and flood monitoring and forecasting, etc.), early warning systems, harmonization of legislation and practices (with the EU Flood Directive), joined building of operational capacities, trainings and exercises and evaluation of measures through river basins commissions and other relevant bodies of the countries in the region for the purpose of bilateral cooperation.

4. Integrated flood risk management and climate change adaptation in a country should become a good practice and, as such, should encompass all relevant stakeholders in prevention and preparedness for flood-related and other disasters, through competent authorities in civil protection and protection and rescue, involving relevant sectors, at all levels of organization. This integrated framework (recognized by UNISDR HFA for disaster reduction) should be interlinked regionally.
5. Bureaucratic procedures in the process of damage assessment and risk analysis must be reduced, simplified and in line with the institutional competencies under relevant laws.
6. Climate change is evident and it's going to cause extreme weather conditions, more severe hazards and, very likely, new, emerging environmental, health and other risks and, therefore, requires urgent risk treatment and risk communication.

Each participating institution in the conference shall, in line with the conclusions, identify specific recommendations for further consideration and implementation by the relevant local, Entity and State institutions, as well as international organizations and other relevant authorities in connection to the issue of floods and flood-related risks. Recommendations (max. 5 per each group, both national and international/regional) shall undergo a "silence procedure" of up to 7 days (from the date of reception), and then be delivered to the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the co-organizers for consideration, editing and polishing, after which recommendations and conclusions shall be made public for all participants and thereafter addressed to policy - making and decision-taking institutions for enforcement/implementation, depending on the availability of resources and funds. These conclusions shall then be made available on the official web-sites of all the partners participating in this initiative.

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