



Joint Press Release
N° 953

BUILDING RESILIENCE TO DISASTERS IN WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY

Geneva/Zagreb, Croatia, 29 August 2012 (UNISDR/WMO) – The United Nations, European Commission and national authorities have launched a new project in the Western Balkans and Turkey that will reduce disaster risks and increase resilience to climate change.

The project launch is planned for 30 August in Zagreb, Croatia and it is aimed at high-level participants from disaster management authorities and national meteorological and hydrological services.

The Western Balkans and Turkey are prone to multiple hazards such as heat and cold waves, precipitation that causes floods as well as landslides, droughts and forest fires and earthquakes. Climate variability and climate change, new land-use patterns and increasing human settlements in vulnerable areas may compound such problems.

The UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) are co-sponsoring the two-year multi-beneficiary project. EUR 2.2 million is being provided by the European Commission's Directorate General for Enlargement, under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance Programme. Beneficiaries are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, and Kosovo (under UN Security Council Resolution 1244/99).

The UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, Margareta Wahlström, said: "Each country has its own unique risk profile but exposure to floods and earthquakes are common to most of the countries which will be assisted under this important programme. Cross-border cooperation on disaster risk management is essential to maximizing resources and ensuring the timely sharing of early warnings between states."

"Weather, climate and the water cycle know no borders. This project will make a very important contribution to strengthening regional capacity to meet present and future risks and adapt to climate variability and change," said WMO Secretary-General Michel Jarraud.

The project will strengthen national disaster risk management, and meteorological and hydrological services. The three main areas of work include: building and enhancing regional networking and coordination for disaster risk reduction; strengthening cross-border cooperation on disaster risk management and increasing regional capacity to monitor and predict hydro-meteorological hazards. The project will also work towards an effective cross-border multi-hazard early warning system.

The project (www.preventionweb.net/ipadrr) will reinforce capacities and help align disaster risk reduction practices of beneficiary institutions with those of European Union countries. It aims to develop a regional multilingual knowledge management system to facilitate information and knowledge sharing on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. The project will support the spread of disaster insurance among homeowners, small and medium enterprises as well as farmers, and increase disaster risk awareness in urban settlements through the *UN World Disaster Reduction Campaign - Making Cities Resilient*.

The joint cooperation will increase cross border exchange of data and warnings, and continue efforts to integrate the Western Balkans and Turkey into the European meteorological infrastructure. It will boost technical capacity for flood and drought risk assessment across vulnerable sectors like agriculture and water, and promote integrated flood management as well as forecasting.

The project also intends to continue the South-East European Climate Outlook Forum which prepares seasonal weather outlooks to help in disaster risk reduction, as well as agriculture, water and energy management. Further it will enhance regional implementation of the *Hyogo Framework for Action - Building the Resilience Of Nations and Communities To Disasters (2005-2015)*, the first global disaster reduction action plan.

The Finnish Meteorological Institute is helping to establish a project office in Skopje, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which will assist beneficiaries in project implementation especially with WMO led components.

UNISDR is the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and is a body mandate by the UN General Assembly to coordinate and advocate for DRR globally

WMO is the United Nations' authoritative voice on weather, climate and water

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