Today, natural and man-made disasters are increasing in frequency and destructive capacity. Major catastrophes occur daily, claiming the lives of thousands of victims, and affecting millions of people globally.

The International Civil Defence Organisation (ICDO) has always sounded the alarm at all levels to accelerate the implementation of practical mechanisms preventing the consequences of disasters. It has a long lasting heritage of close cooperation with governmental, regional, and international organisations, scientific and expert communities, as well as of the private sector.

Every year, the 1st of March marks the global celebration of the ‘World Civil Defence Day’ established by the ICDO in 1990. The aim of this celebration is to establish a platform to build safer and more united communities within all nations.

The themes of this commemoration cover issues related to the safeguard of populations, property, and the environment, as well as more specific topics such as the education of children or women empowerment, all of which directly relate to civil protection, civil defence and emergency services.

Over time, this special event attracted more attention worldwide, with the increasing involvement of numerous countries in raising civil society awareness of disaster prevention and risk reduction.

One of the key activities of the ICDO is to train and prepare Senior Officials of civil protection and civil defence across the world. The permanent involvement of civil society is essential to this process.

In 2013, the ICDO pursued its calls to action by making joint international statements such as the Gabala Declaration at the ‘13th International Conference on Civil Defence’ in Azerbaijan, the Doha Declaration at the ‘4th International Conference and Exhibition’ in Qatar, and the Ouagadougou Declaration at the ‘1ère Réunion Africaine des Directeurs de la Protection Civile’ in Burkina Faso. It is now time to launch an urgent appeal to all national authorities and decision-makers to accelerate the development of strong structures of civil protection, civil defence, and emergency services.
An essential component of this process is to provide these structures with adequate professional equipment and skilled personnel.

Dear colleagues,

We must create a culture of civil defence based on prevention rather than response.

Prevention programmes play a crucial role in saving people’s lives and preventing material losses by improving the capacity of national structures of civil protection, civil defence and emergency services. However, while prevention is a vital factor, it is also a complex task that requires adaptation to each new situation. Many emergency response simulation exercises should be inspired from the various types of risks that exist to specialize the response capacity and proper handling of emergency interventions. For instance, prevention policies must take into account the regulations in all types of facilities such as the ongoing maintenance of fire-fighting and alarm systems, materials, devices and equipment of prevention, as well as the constant control and supervision of workplaces involving oil, gas, chemicals, and other hazards.

The implementation of these programmes involves close cooperation with national higher authorities and monitoring from the private sector and public utility organisations.

Prevention programmes should focus on areas such as risk assessment through the adoption and development of national and regional mechanisms and tools. Preparedness of civil protection, civil defence and emergency services officials through specialized training is also crucial. The programmes should equally include the organisation of forums, seminars and workshops that contribute to raising citizens’ awareness. They should additionally refer to the works of researchers, academicians and experts from various disciplines. Lastly, the programmes should incorporate preventive education for children based on a daily routine conduct among citizens.

The consequences of global warming, resulting from intensive industrial and technological development, have become one of the major threats to which civil protection, civil defence and emergency services are confronted nowadays.

To fight this new crisis and to ensure the safeguard of the population, property, and the environment, we need to disseminate and implement prevention measures, to exchange information, to use good planning, as well as to involve scientific institutions at the practical and theoretical levels.
All of this implies that the programmes should concern a wide range of partners that should assume their role in this ongoing process.

The International Civil Defence Organisation (ICDO) is the only specialized international organisation that unifies national structures of civil protection, civil defence and emergency services across the world. It seeks not only to bring them together and facilitate their exchanges, but also to increase the participation of all international bodies in sharing their expertise to strengthen the capacity of countries in need. Additionally, the ICDO assists States by developing systems that provide protection and assistance to the population, property and the environment, from natural and man-made disasters.

I would like to seize this opportunity to thank the countries that have successfully reinforced their capacity in all fields of civil protection, civil defence, and emergency services, and wish them to pursue our common endeavour.

I would also like to use the commemoration of the ‘World Civil Defence Day’ to pay tribute to those who died on duty, and call upon all states to recognize them as role models for generations to come. I would also like to wish a prompt recovery to the injured civil protection, civil defence and emergency services personnel.

I express my warmest greetings and gratitude to the veterans of all ranks of civil defence, civil protection and emergency services, and invite them to join the ICDO family by getting involved in the preparation, training and education of younger generations.

Finally, on this great occasion, I express my warmest greetings and wishes of good luck to the personnel of civil protection, civil defence and emergency services across the world, for their noble work of assisting, protecting, and rescuing citizens. I wish them much success in their mission, and make the promise that the ICDO will make its best to equip them with due knowledge and professionalism towards the achievement of our common goal.

Dr. Vladimir Kuvshinov
Secretary-General