

## **THE CHALLENGES FOR CIVIL DEFENCE IN THE FACE OF GLOBALISATION**

**When observing what is happening in the world it is noticeable that in the North and South, in the East and West there is a constant increase in flows of all kinds. Flows of people, of ideas and knowledge, and of material goods. This proliferation of movement is mainly due to the major developments which have marked the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: scientific and technical discoveries, the development of means of communication and transport have been and still are the basis of a redefinition of the way in which we face political, economic and social questions. The era of the global village suggested at the beginning of the 1960s by the American communications philosopher, Marshall Mac Luan has arrived. It is globalisation.**

The earth is a small planet which orbits around the sun, victim since time immemorial of natural changes that we describe as disasters, and which today is home to seven billion people, who love and hate, show solidarity and selfishness, express themselves in thousands of different idioms and communicate through the INTERNET.

These billions of human beings have ever increasing and pressing needs. Quality of life tops the list. In all the countries of the world, whatever the culture or environment, everyone is demanding certain basic requirements: access to health care, education and knowledge, but also to consumer goods. Another need deserves attention, that of security: preventing risks and dangers, both natural and linked to man's activities, the mitigation of natural and technological disasters through emergency rescue and rehabilitation missions are unavoidable factors in what is known as sustainable development.

### **Hopes and fears**

Expressed by greater interdependence and integration between human societies, globalisation is providing us with new perspectives, as a result of the exchange and sharing of intellectual and material resources. Globalisation carries many hopes of building a better, more gratifying and safer environment for human beings.

However, globalisation does not only have positive effects. Despite the progress made inequalities still exist and are growing. The poor of fifty years ago have not become rich as was expected and are, on the contrary, ever poorer. The rift between the North and South is still all too real. Development for all, a global goal established following the Second World War, has not been attained and the debt of those countries which have not managed to develop economically is even greater. In 1960 the population of the richest countries, that is 20% of the world population, had an income 30 times higher than that of the poorest fifth. In 1995 this ratio has grown to 82. On the road to globalisation the weak and the destitute have been left by the wayside.

What should specifically be remembered on the subject of the negative effects of globalisation are the perverse effects of progress.

Human beings are ever more numerous and the rampant demography leads to more and more concentration of people in the poor urban communities that are the shantytowns and

suburbs of megalopolis. In these places, where pollution, insalubrity and insecurity are rife, infectious diseases and epidemics will continue to claim numerous victims, especially in developing countries. Hunger, a problem which it had been thought would be easy to solve, thanks to the great progress made in the fields of agriculture and the agro-industry, is reappearing in many parts of the globe, particularly in Africa. Finally, violence is developing. Be it armed conflict, terrorism, or criminality, the number of victims is constantly increasing; genocide, torture and other breaches of human rights are incalculable.

On another level, through the transformation processes of raw materials into finished products, progress has facilitated the unrestrained exploitation and consumption of natural resources. Industrialisation has led to serious environmental pollution and changes to the biosphere. Technological accidents, whether oil spills, or radio-active pollution such as that which followed the accident in the Chernobyl nuclear power station in the Ukraine in 1986, which caused thousands of victims and is still affecting the environment today, are more and more numerous and most often due to negligence in the race for profit. Modifications to the biosphere due to pollution - depletion of the ozone layer due to excessive carbon gas emissions, global warming and the creation of new natural phenomenon such El Nino and La Nina which are at the root of the immense damage caused notably by hurricanes and typhoons - make us fear the imminence of major environmental upheavals which will have terrible repercussions on our living conditions. Nobody knows yet if the planet will survive the massive industrialisation, the deforestation, the rising sea levels, and the exploitation of non-renewable resources. What will humanity do in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, how will it ensure its survival in these conditions? Nobody knows.

The picture painted by globalisation is, as we can see, at once both full of promises of a wonderful future, where the well being of all is ensured and heavy with the menace of destruction and the death of human civilisations. The phenomena of interdependence and integration induced by globalisation therefore have both positive and negative aspects. In this context it is up to man to use his creativity and common sense to find solutions that will improve his condition but also to show restraint, a commitment to conservation and respect for his environment.

### **The State: guarantor of security in the face of disasters**

In this context what can the national civil defence structures, which are State instruments established to provide protection and assistance for all in the face of natural and man-made disasters, do?

Firstly, it should be noted that these will always be more and more called upon as long as risks and dangers are, as we have seen, constantly increasing and that the ever-greater occurrence of disasters is as predictable as it is unavoidable. It is therefore the duty of States to strengthen them and maximise their capacities. The State is the keystone of society and it is in the first instance its duty to guarantee the well-being and security of populations, and the safeguard of property and the environment. It is the international Community's duty to ensure that States, which are incarnations of the admittedly imperfect order which prevails on this planet and guarantee the stability of our societies, do not fail in their duties and have suitable means to succeed. The national civil defence structures are one of their tools. The International Community must help and assist the weakest States to face their responsibilities.

We hear within different circles of decision-makers that countries, because of globalisation, will gather their forces into regional entities and that national governments will lose some of their autonomy, some of their powers passing to the control of supranational organisations and local authorities. We are also told that the balance of power between the State and various elements of society should change and that governments will intervene less in the provision of services as these will depend more and more on the market and on private initiatives. From this we can conclude that the withdrawal of the State from this sphere of activities, and the support given to local participation and the actions of individuals, will lead to a new division of responsibility in the provision of services, the paid agents of the civil service giving way to non official players.

On the contrary, the State must keep all its prerogatives and abandon nothing to the private sector. The State is the guarantor of society's freedom; it is the guarantor of its well-being and its security since only the State has the duty to offer equitable and impartial services, especially in providing protection and assistance to populations in the face of disasters. Civil society and the private sector do indeed have a role to play in this but they cannot, on the basis of mandates which they themselves both define and grant, provide answers to all society's needs, or provide the necessary and often very important means to confront all these situations. If civil society and the private sector are perfectly capable of undertaking some work in this field, such as the distribution of food after a disaster, or other humanitarian actions, it is neither in their power, nor within their means, to manage complex technical systems of protection and assistance which are in essence a part of the State infrastructure. Were this the case, market laws would soon lead to economic disparities in services, based first on questions of profitability, thus leaving out the poorest.

It should be remembered that the United Nations General Assembly, under the terms of resolution 2034 which it adopted on 7 December 1965, invited States to put in place an appropriate national planning and intervention system that is best suited to their particular situation in order to define the scope and nature of assistance needed and to centralise the management of disaster rescue operations. This resolution is now more topical than ever.

If States, for whatever reason, do not have the means to give their national civil defence structures the means to accomplish their mission the international community must help them. The international community's efforts in the field of natural disaster prevention, preparedness and intervention must, in the first instance, concentrate on developing the capacity of national civil defence structures. However this is not the case today. The ICDO, which has fought for this since its creation, is sparing no effort to make this message heard and for it to be answered.

In the changing environment, full of opportunities and risks, which is that of globalisation, the challenges for States and their civil defence organisations, are as numerous as they are difficult.

We have seen that the national civil defence structures would always be more in demand in terms of disaster prevention, preparedness and intervention. With respect to this, it is worth stressing a very important point which has not always been given the attention it deserves. During the World Conference on Civil Defence that took place in Beijing in 1998, the ICDO stated that civil defence is also a body for reflection and advice. It should not be forgotten that civil defence structures should anticipate and foresee disasters, draw up intervention plans and develop the practice of learning from experience. Civil defence must also play its role of

adviser to the full. It should act as the State's technical counsellor in the field of risk management. Civil defence must plead with the State in favour of the integration of emergency prevention and preparedness measures in the long-term social and economic development policies, in so far as the budgets needed for these activities must imperatively be taken into account despite the financial constraints facing most countries. Moreover, civil defence must argue for priority to be given to prevention and preparation measures as these are likely to reduce the number and the consequences of disasters as well as the recourse to rescue and rehabilitation operations which are always very expensive.

### **Civil Defence : an indispensable tool**

Civil defence is a coordinating body whose mission within the State is to provide protection and assistance for all. It works in a multi-sectorial framework and as such it should coordinate the actions of the different State bodies concerned with disaster prevention and mitigation. Civil defence must therefore have a global and forward-looking vision of the situations in which it may be called to intervene.

The national civil defence structures must be strong and respected. For this they have to be credible and their work must be recognised. The training of civil defence managers and personnel is the cornerstone of the recognition of these structures. Investments must be made in training because training leads to ever-greater efficiency. Human resources are the greatest asset of civil defence structures. This is why it is important that these assets be safeguarded. States must therefore make the development and strengthening of their civil defence structures one of their most important priorities. Too often State expenditure in this matter is relegated to a secondary level to the detriment of the people and property that they are to safeguard.

Finally, civil defence is a big family, united by the universal principles of humanity, solidarity, and impartiality. Too often, however, because of terminology, the civil defence, civil defence, civil security, and emergency management structures, whatever their name and the emblem they wear, do not cooperate enough. The objective of their mission – to protect and assist – should unite them and the structural differences found between various countries should not hinder their collaboration. Unfortunately, most of the time these differences are brought to the fore, to the detriment of the real substance of their missions. However, if civil defence is to assume a role, as an actor that cannot be ignored, in sustainable development at the international level it must show its unity, which will be proof of its strength. Civil defence must therefore present a united front. When major disasters occur the international community distributes its assistance through organisations other than those of civil defence because civil defence is not sufficiently structured at the international level and lacks exposure. This must change. The ICDO is working towards this as far as its means allow.

### **Mutual comprehension and technical progress**

After this overview it is appropriate to consider how globalisation can help civil defence to meet its objectives.

Firstly globalisation leads to standardisation and the adoption of norms in all fields, including that of emergency management. Communication can only be established if everyone speaks the same language, uses the same reference points and the same common criteria. From one country to another the diameter of fire hydrant outlets are different, the

emergency services telephone numbers are different, rescue procedures are different. This has to change and it will since globalisation requires it to. Standardisation, the adoption of common norms is therefore also an opportunity for civil defence as regards training the general public and raising its awareness of the risks and dangers. The adoption of common norms will facilitate the work of civil defence as much at the national level as at the international level. In terms of information the development of the INTERNET offers civil defence an opportunity that must be seized. The communication tool of the future, the INTERNET already allows important savings in the cost of communications. Communications on paper will disappear, replaced by electronic communications. Apart from the lower costs its main advantage rests in the speed of information diffusion which happens in real time. Civil defence must make efforts also in this field, to learn to use this new communications tool which could become the primary instrument in the spreading of a culture of disaster prevention at the planetary level.

In the face of the dangers that are threatening us human solidarity should grow stronger. This will be one of the results of globalisation. Disasters are not always limited to the borders of one country and they will be less and less so. Solidarity between States will develop automatically in the future because States will – we can say they already do - understand that it is impossible to fight disasters that affect the whole planet without adopting a global approach to these phenomenon. States will be obliged to cooperate in the fields of disaster prediction, prevention, preparedness and intervention. The lessons learned will be shared at an international level and the obstacles which today still prejudice international cooperation between national civil defence structures will gradually be removed.

We should also highlight another advantage, and not the least, of globalisation: giant steps are being made in terms of technical progress. Civil defence will be able to rely more and more on technology when undertaking its work. Today science can predict certain earthquakes, numerical satellite geographic information systems allow risk zones to be identified, early warning systems for hurricanes, typhoons and other natural disasters caused by climatic conditions make it possible to take early preventive measures, before the disaster occurs. Finally, civil defence can also rely on more and more efficient equipment when undertaking its mission in all its fields of activity.

In conclusion, we can note that the challenges awaiting civil defence are great. They certainly will not be easy to face. The ICDO for its part will do whatever is in its power to fully meet its target: to be at the service of national civil defence structures by providing counsel, helping them and arguing their case. This task is not easy but the ICDO will do all it can to contribute to the success of the concept adopted by the Beijing conference in 1998 “Protection and assistance for all in the face of disasters in the 21<sup>st</sup> century”.