

“SOLIDARITY IN ACTION”

JOINT STATEMENT

**OF THE MINISTERS FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE SOUTH EAST EUROPE COOPERATION PROCESS (SEECP)**

OHRID, 31 MAY 2013

We, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the South East Europe Cooperation Process (SEECP), have met in Ohrid at the Formal Meeting of the SEECP Ministers for Foreign Affairs to discuss disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation,

Recalling the Joint Statement of the SEECP Ministerial Conference held in Belgrade 2011; the Declaration of the SEECP Ministerial Conference held in Antalya 2010; the Declaration of the SEECP Ministerial Conference held in Sofia 2008; and the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: *Building the resilience of nations and communities to disaster*, as internationally agreed framework on disaster risk reduction;

Recalling also the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 1992; the United Nations General Assembly resolutions on the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction; the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR), the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction (EFDRR), the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, as internationally recognized resolutions and forums for information and knowledge exchange and partnership building;

Recognizing that the number and scale of natural disasters and their increasing impact in recent years, which resulted in loss of life and long-term negative social, economic and environmental consequences are hindering the achievement of national and regional sustainable development, economic growth and prosperity;

Recalling the sustainable development principles endorsed in the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro (June 2012) and its outcome document “The Future We Want” which stresses the importance of disaster risk reduction, building resilience to disasters, and the Hyogo Framework for Action priorities to preserve development gains and promote resilient communities and nations in the context of sustainable development;

Recalling that the “Europe 2020: A Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth” recognizes the possibility of achieving sustainable growth, among other, through combating climate change and strengthening the economies’ resilience to climate risks, and the capacities for disaster prevention and response;

Recalling also that climate change poses major challenges to all parts of Europe and require specific responses as outlined in the European Commission Communication on an EU strategy on adaptation to climate change adopted in April 2013 , as well as in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region;

Recalling also that the EU Civil Protection Mechanism offers a comprehensive framework for cooperation between the EU and the EU candidate countries and potential candidates from the SEE in the field of disaster management and that the new proposal for EU civil protection legislation presented by the European Commission will further enhance disaster prevention and disaster risk reduction in the countries participating in the Mechanism;

Commending the continuous efforts of the Institute of Earthquake Engineering and Engineering Seismology, IZIIS, University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje, dedicated to the study of strong earthquake occurrence, definition and improvement of methods of earthquake risk assessment, study of seismicity and evaluation of the risk related to occurrence of future earthquake damage, and defining the technical basis for earthquake reduction;

Reaffirming our full commitment to further strengthen our joint efforts to advance regional resilience to disasters and climate change as important elements that contribute to achieving stable economic and social development in direction of improving the resilience of SEECP participating states, to be further implemented through the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South-Eastern Europe (DPPI) and with the support of the RCC and other Regional Initiatives and Organizations;

Reaffirming our commitment to further strengthen joint efforts in disasters and climate change as important elements that contribute to achieving stable economic and social development in direction of improving the resilience of SEECP Participating States, to be further implemented through the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South-Eastern Europe (DPPI) and with the support of the RCC and other Regional Initiatives and Organizations;

We agreed to:

Enhance regional cooperation to further strengthen the capabilities of SEECP participating states for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Invite our national institutions involved in disaster risk management, environment and public finances to set a regional Ministerial meeting with the aim to address, in compliance with the EU Civil Protection mechanism and in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action priorities, a roadmap for South Eastern Europe. Invite RCC through DPPI to coordinate and monitor these activities.

Advance our efforts to integrate disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation measures in major policies and financial instruments related in particular to: agriculture, energy, infrastructure, health, environment, environmental impact assessment, land use, urban, and spatial planning, social policies, response and post-recovery programmes;

Encourage our relevant national institutions, to regularly assess progress at regional meetings against the goals set by the Hyogo Framework for Action and – in future perspective – those of the successor of the Hyogo Framework for Action from 2015 onwards;

Encourage the involvement of local governments and communities in enhancing education and public awareness to disaster risks and climate change adaptation; cross-border cooperation is considered as a key tool for sharing knowledge and information on disaster risks good practices that can be applied at local level;

Stress the importance of building regional capabilities to reduce vulnerability to disasters through cooperation with DPPI, and participating actively in the global and European forums for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation;

Support DPPI mandate with the aim of achieving strengthened regional capacity and cooperation, including towards data and knowledge sharing on disaster risks and negative implications on all societal levels, as well as to further facilitate replication and scaling up of good practices on risk prevention and reduction in close collaboration with the EU;

Encourage RCC, DPPI, the EU and other Regional Organizations as well as International Organizations such as UNISDR to provide additional guidance, principles and tools for effective implementation of countries' and region specific measures to serve for activities of the national platforms for disaster risk reduction in South Eastern Europe;

Encourage the efforts of SEECP Participating States and RCC to include enhanced regional cooperation in the field of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation as valuable components in the South East Europe 2020 Strategy, representing concepts and actions that are in line with securing envisioned economic growth of the region and reflect corresponding elements in Europe 2020;

Encourage the cooperation among academic, expert and civil communities in South East Europe in the field of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation through promotion of scientific and technical knowledge in building regional resilience and enhancing regional capability in creation and implementation of comprehensive solutions to natural disasters;

We welcome continuation of further intensive involvement of the European Union and the EU Civil Protection Mechanism with the candidate and potential candidate countries in the South East Europe with the emphasis on risk reduction, preparedness and response to disasters; We acknowledge that future financial support in this field provided by the Union through its Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance will be linked to and dependable on countries' prioritisation of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in their national strategic planning.

Adopted in Ohrid on 31 May 2013

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Recognizing that the number and scale of natural disasters and their increasing impact in recent years, which resulted in loss of life and long-term negative social, economic and environmental consequences are hindering the achievement of national and regional sustainable development, economic growth and prosperity;

Recalling the sustainable development principles endorsed in the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro (June 2012) and its outcome document “The Future We Want” which stresses the importance of disaster risk reduction, building resilience to disasters, and the Hyogo Framework for Action priorities to preserve development gains and promote resilient communities and nations in the context of sustainable development;

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Encourage our relevant national institutions, to regularly assess progress at regional meetings against the goals set by the Hyogo Framework for Action and – in future perspective – those of the successor of the Hyogo Framework for Action from 2015 onwards;

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