

Talking points for the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)
Director General of the Secretariat – Ambassador Maira Mora
European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction
3-5 October 2016, Helsinki

High Level Panel moderated by Mr. Robert Glasser, Special Representative of
the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Disaster Risk Reduction

Dear Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very honored to address such a distinguished audience, and would like to begin by expressing special thanks to the organizers of this forum; the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction – the regional office for Europe, the Council of Europe and the European Commission, and of course the Finnish Ministry of Interior, who is hosting us here in Helsinki, for inviting me and offering this opportunity to present the CBSS position on matters which are related to building the resilience of our societies to major disasters.

This forum is indeed very important, not solely because it creates the opportunity for us to exchange knowledge and information, but primarily because new opportunities can arise from the meetings like this, and synergies can be created by the launching of new co-operations and development of new partnerships. Common challenges can turn into joint opportunities - when we face them together.

The first and most important question to address is; why are we here and why is Disaster Risk Reduction important for the work the CBSS is doing? The short answer is that it is about the welfare and well-being of our citizens; however, this is not a simple answer.

Wellbeing is equally much about a sense of security, meaning the individual citizen's subjective experiences – as well as real, de facto security, in terms of civil protection and the creation of a resilient society. If we are powerless or at least very weakly prepared to facing emergencies, we lose a lot of opportunities for making our economies work better, for improving the organization of our

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societies, and for providing our citizens with public services, which meet their needs.

In Europe, disasters have cost billions in damages each year; therefore mitigation of losses is crucial for the welfare and prosperity of the region. The Sendai Framework is a global platform that addresses these issues from local, regional and national perspectives. Such a multi-governance perspective is essential in order to effectively address the issue of disaster risk reduction. The implementation of the Sendai Framework provides new possibilities for the CBSS to co-operate on how efforts can best be coordinated in the regional setting.

Cooperation is a key to many solutions, although sometimes it is a key challenge in itself. However, there are several areas where we absolutely have to work together – in Europe as a whole and in the Baltic Sea Region – to make our efforts powerful and meaningful. A cornerstone of the CBSS' work is to establish a comprehensive macro-regional framework for cooperation. The actions we all take are more efficient when they are coordinated and made coherent, and we need a coherent approach to reducing transboundary vulnerabilities, to enhance regional resilience and to build common capacities for societal security.

We have three long-term priorities for our work in CBSS:

- to enhance the regional identity in the Baltic Sea Region,
- to work for a sustainable and prosperous region,
- and to establish a safe and secure region for all people living here.

Let me focus on the last priority and its relation to the Sendai Framework objectives.

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The possibility of establishing and maintaining a safe and secure region can only be achieved through co-operation, both in Europe in general, as well as in the Baltic Sea Region. It is not possible for one actor to achieve this objective single-handed; therefore we have to work together regarding these issues. This goal is especially put forward from the CBSS Secretariat's side through the work of the Civil Protection Network, the Expert Group on Nuclear and Radiation Safety, as well as the Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings and the Expert Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk. The CBSS Secretariat, together with the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, is also responsible for coordinating Policy Area Secure – within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, which encompasses both civil protection and law enforcement, and its focus is on ensuring cross-boundary and cross-sectoral cooperation.

The CBSS aims to contribute to building a safe and secure region, and the Sendai Framework is an important platform for this work, therefore we are very glad that we have recently started the collaboration with the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction in these efforts.

Each of the CBSS Member States' work with the implementation of the Sendai Framework can in some respects be facilitated through CBSS, and we look forward to working closer with the framework onwards. The aim of CBSS, through the coordination of PA Secure, is to constitute an information hub for stakeholders dealing with safety and security issues in the region. Coordination is about connecting networks and actors, as well as identification of funding opportunities for newly established partnerships. The strategic objective for the coordination of PA Secure is to build the capacity of the stakeholders in the area for an enhanced participation in cross-

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border cooperation and to facilitate the creation of new partnerships between stakeholders in the civil protection sector. One of the key activities related to capacity building has been the Baltic Leadership Programme in Civil Protection, in which future decision makers and managers in relevant agencies have participated. In the establishment of new networks to improve the exchange of information, the Sendai Framework offers a joint agenda for organizations that have not co-operated with each other before. We plan to continue the leadership program in the next years, and we believe that it may become another platform to increase knowledge about the Sendai Framework amongst professionals dealing with crisis management issues, as well as it has the potential to set the ground for better management of the comprehensive disaster risk reduction implementation processes.

The objectives within the Sendai Framework, and in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, are laying the ground for the efforts presented through projects in Policy Area Secure. Some of the key objectives in Policy Area Secure are;

- To strengthen the capacity to respond and recover from major emergencies and accidents – which also includes better risk assessment and crises management, and
- To build resilience and to prevent emergencies and threats at the local level.

Projects and efforts for the implementation of the Sendai Framework are – as we speak – being planned and organized through the coordination of PA Secure. Cross-cutting co-operation between different areas – especially in relation to disaster risk reduction – is very important, and the co-operation between civil protection and

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climate change professionals needs to be further developed to address the modern challenges we are facing.

The CBSS Secretariat – through the coordination of Policy Area Secure and Horizontal Action Climate – is currently the lead partner in a project aiming to build a larger network, where the objective will be to further the implementation of the Sendai Framework in the Baltic Sea Region. This is the first purely “Sendai project” and starts now. The project is funded by the Swedish Institute and has the title: *Making Communities Resilient to Climate Change: Cross-sectorial Cooperation in Capacity Building*. The project will run for one year, the planned outcome is the establishment of a network and partnerships, and an application for a larger scale project from DG ECHO.

Through the work in former projects – and the results from those projects - CBSS has participated in the development of a concrete risk assessment methodology. This methodology can function as an important asset for the experts working with the implementation of the Sendai Framework and can be a valuable contribution to the implementation process in general.

Different kinds of disasters – natural or man-made – may be lurking from any corner, however the approach the Sendai Framework promotes, and the agenda this forum presents regarding disaster risk reduction – rather than disaster reduction, stress we should not be bystanders who observe events and act wisely in the aftermath of those events – rather the new agenda is about learning from past events and be prepared and ready for what possibly could come, which enable us to act proactively, and to mitigate and prevent disasters.

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The acknowledgment of co-operation is embedded in the recognition of the approach, which the Sendai Framework promotes. The challenges we are facing create opportunities for co-operation, and we need to focus on joint efforts and a common framework for action – and the Sendai Framework represents such an opportunity. A common framework for action does not only give us the incentive for increased co-operation, but it mainly presents an opportunity to make our efforts coherent. The Sendai Framework is in line with EU policy and presents the possibility of broader and deeper forms of collaborations and actions.

In the effort to work preventively and to build preparedness, all the levels of governance – the local, regional, national as well as the European, need to be engaged, along with NGOs, businesses, and the academia. All relevant stakeholders have to be activated where their competence is needed. It is important to build knowledge-based initiatives with stakeholders from different levels of governance, as well as different sectors of the society.

It is in the CBSS interest to co-operate closely with the local and the regional levels of governance, and the Union of the Baltic Cities functions as a platform where the ambitions for joint efforts come together.

In our day and age, with the developments in the world, it is important to remember the common goals we have. The Sendai Framework represents one of these goals where we can unite our efforts and work together. We should remember that the process of implementation will become more efficient if we exchange knowledge and experience with our neighboring countries.

The challenges we are facing – may they be climate change, extreme weather events, or man-made disasters – if we face them together,

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and exchange experience, knowledge, and wisdom, we can create preparedness through grasping the opportunity for co-operation and this preparedness can greatly contribute to disaster risk reduction. With these words, I would like to thank you all for your attention and wish you all an interesting forum with many productive discussions.