

**MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL
OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL DEFENCE ORGANIZATION (ICDO)
ON THE OCCASION OF WORLD CIVIL DEFENCE DAY (WCDD) 2024**

Honourable members of the civil defence community,

As a prelude to the celebration of World Civil Defence Day 2024, it is an honour for me to address the whole world in general and the world of civil defence in particular. I cannot begin this exercise without once again extending the International Civil Defence Organization's (ICDO) sincere thanks to all those, laypeople, amateurs, volunteers or civil defence professionals who, over the past year, have put their lives at risk to protect or save those of others.

Indeed, 2023 was a year marked by disasters. With natural phenomena such as cataclysmic earthquakes and floods and severe unrest of socio-political origins causing the massive displacement of people to other countries, amongst others things, civil defence players were active on all fronts. We still remember their presence in Turkey, Syria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Morocco, Libya, Palestine and elsewhere. These momentous events in terms of the number of deaths and material damage did not, however, detract from other, more numerous events that occurred the world over and from which no community was spared. Whether it's road accidents, forest fires, landslides, hurricanes, etc., all these phenomena that result in deaths and economic losses deserve special attention because "every death in a disaster is the death of a healthy person". The year 2023 ended with tens of thousands of lives lost, mainly to earthquakes, floods and human conflicts, not to mention the inestimable damage caused to property and the environment.

Fortunately, the active solidarity of States, both internationally and at the level of national institutions, was set in motion to save lives, alleviate suffering and restore living conditions. To achieve this, various techniques were deployed, ranging from rudimentary means to innovative technologies, depending on the category of player and the level of intervention.

In a context where the effects of climate change are no longer a taboo, in view of the ever-increasing number and intensity of disasters and their impact on people, property and the environment, regardless of the level of affluence of communities, the International Civil Defence

Organisation has recommended that as part of the celebration of World Civil Defence Day 2024 we reflect on the following subject: "**Innovative technologies at the service of Civil Defence**".

The wide range of tools available due to these technologies means that they are accessible to everyone, on basis of their abilities. Drones, Satellites, Robots and Autonomous Vehicles, Intelligent Sensors, 3D Technology, Geographic Information Systems, the Internet of Things and People, and Artificial Intelligence are all tools that Civil Defence players can use to predict, prevent, prepare, respond or rebuild.

In terms of prediction, satellite technologies provide real-time data for risk monitoring; similarly, the analysis of historical disaster databases using Artificial Intelligence can help predict emergency situations. The Internet of Things and People can be used to inform, educate and raise awareness among the general public in emergency management situations. The power of social media in this respect is well established in terms of disseminating useful messages among the general public, which is the main focus of Civil Defence before, during and after emergency situations, in order to reduce their impact. The use of Drones, Robots and other intelligent devices helps to reduce the consequences of disasters by providing easy and/or rapid access to dangerous or hard-to-reach areas.

Among other things, these technologies are helping to strengthen the coordination of the various Civil Defence structures and involvement of local people in disaster risk management. The integration of these technologies into risk and emergency management systems will undoubtedly considerably improve the safety of the public and of civil defence personnel.

The ICDO invites key players in civil defence to invest more in the development and integration of innovative technologies in all phases of disaster risk management, whether they be natural or man-made.

I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm the ICDO's commitment to playing its part in reducing the risk of disasters and their impact throughout the world. We aim to achieve this, in part, through training and technical assistance programmes tailored to the development of national civil defence systems.

The General Secretary

Mariatou YAP