



## **Message by the Secretary General of the International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO) on the occasion of World Civil Defence Day 2026 Theme: “Managing Environmental Risks for a Resilient and Sustainable Future”**

On the occasion of World Civil Defence Day, observed annually on 1 March, I have the honour, on behalf of the Permanent Secretariat of the International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO), to extend my warm greetings to all Member States, Observer States, and to our Host Nation. This year’s observance, held under the theme “Managing Environmental Risks for a Resilient and Sustainable Future,” underscores the growing importance of anticipating, reducing, and responding to risks associated with environmental degradation and the accelerating impacts of climate change.

World Civil Defence Day provides an important opportunity to reaffirm our collective commitment to the protection of civilian populations and to the humanitarian principles that underpin the work of our Organization. In an increasingly complex risk environment, characterized by natural disasters, technological hazards, climate change, and evolving humanitarian challenges, civil defence and civil protection remain central to strengthening safety, resilience, and the protection of human dignity.

In this regard, the management of environmental risks should be understood not as a separate policy area, but as an integral component of civil protection. It requires enhanced early warning capacities, strengthened prevention and preparedness measures, and the development of resilient infrastructure and communities, in order to ensure sustainable development and safeguard human security.

This observance also provides an opportunity for reflection. In recent years, the ICDO has experienced a period of significant transition. While these challenges have tested the Organization, they have also reaffirmed the continued relevance of its mandate and highlighted the importance of unity, solidarity, and shared responsibility among Member States.

Since my election as Secretary-General, the ICDO, together with the Permanent Secretariat, has undertaken a process of renewal and consolidation. Measures have been implemented to restore balanced operations in Geneva, strengthen governance and transparency, enhance financial discipline, and rebuild confidence in the Organization as a reliable international platform for civil defence and civil protection. The securing of new premises in the Nations District of Geneva reflects this continuity and demonstrates our firm commitment to maintaining a strong institutional presence in Switzerland.

Guided by the principle that prevention is protection, the ICDO continues to prioritize risk reduction before crises occur. Strengthening national civil defence systems, enhancing preparedness, promoting training and innovation, and reinforcing

international cooperation remain at the core of our activities. Through these efforts, we seek to ensure inclusive protection and to uphold the safety and dignity of all people.

In line with this year's theme, the ICDO will continue to support Member States in integrating environmental risk management into national resilience strategies and civil defence planning, ensuring coherence across prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery, with due consideration for long term sustainability.

This occasion also highlights the importance of partnership. Effective civil defence relies on close cooperation among governments, international and regional organizations, academic institutions, and civil society. The ICDO remains committed to strengthening its partnerships, promoting multipolar cooperation, and encouraging broader geographical representation, in keeping with the universal character of its humanitarian mandate. Such inclusive cooperation is essential to addressing environmental risks that increasingly transcend national borders and require coordinated, evidence based, and people centred approaches.

I wish to express my appreciation to all Member States and Observer States for their continued engagement, as well as to those that have demonstrated solidarity through financial contributions, secondments, and active participation in the Organization's work. This support enhances our collective capacity and reflects a shared commitment to the future of the ICDO.

I also wish to convey my sincere gratitude to the Swiss Confederation for its longstanding support as Host Nation. Switzerland's humanitarian tradition and sustained commitment to multilateralism remain of vital importance to the Organization.

As we observe World Civil Defence Day, let us reaffirm our shared purpose. Through cooperation, transparency, innovation, and mutual trust, we can strengthen resilience, reduce vulnerability, and enhance the protection of human life.

By addressing environmental risks with resolve and foresight, we can contribute to a more resilient and sustainable future for our societies and for future generations.

May this observance serve as a renewed call for collective action toward a safer and more resilient world.

Please accept, Excellencies, the assurances of my highest consideration.

**Secretary-General  
Arguj Kalantarli**