

Message from Mr. Nawaf Al-Sleibi
Secretary General of the International Civil Defence Organisation (ICDO)
on World Civil Defence Day March 1st, 2010

“Disaster Medicine”

Disaster medicine is a specific type of medicine, dealing with extreme emergencies where every minute counts. This type of medicine is practiced in difficult settings and involves ongoing risks with massive inflows of victims requiring triage.

Looked at disaster medicine from this prospective, we see it has much in common with other medical specialisations. War medicine, for example, since war, like natural disasters, causes many victims. Emergency medicine is another example since through precise acts and appropriate care it enables the wounded to be transported under good conditions so they can be operated on with the greatest chances of success.

In order for disaster medicine to be able to provide victims with the best and most rapid care possible, expertise in medical techniques, perfect organisation and operational tactics are required. Whenever there are large numbers of victims it inevitably follows that there will be many different intervening parties (*inter alia*, fire brigades, civil defence, the Red Cross, the administrative and legal authorities, social services). Hierarchies must be established, monitored and coordinated so that they can interact efficiently.

In other words, disaster medicine cannot be improvised. A high level of competence is necessary, which can only be achieved through the study of theory and acquisition of cutting-edge training.

Mindful of this, the ICDO, whose main activity is civil defence training, has not remained idle in this regard. For the past several years we have organized training sessions on disaster medicine open to doctors and nurses in civil defence services of State members. Such efforts will continue in 2010; two training sessions on this theme have already been scheduled.

The ICDO welcomes this opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to support all national and international initiatives that will help as many professionals as possible hone their skills and develop the expertise needed in disaster situations.

Today, as we commemorate World Civil Defence Day 2010, the ICDO would like to pay tribute to the health-care personnel who save lives and safeguard the health of populations confronted by disasters, whether natural or man-made.