

**Message of the Secretary-General  
of the International Civil Defence Organisation (ICDO)  
on the occasion of the  
World Civil Defence Day**

**1 March 2006**

***Civil Defence at school***

In view of the increase in the number of disasters and of victims of disasters in the world, it is more than ever necessary to think in terms of prevention and preparedness in the face of disasters.

In most countries programmes for the information and education of the population are regularly implemented at the initiative of governments and also of governmental and non-governmental organisations with the aim of preventing and preparing for disasters situations.

Many efforts are thus made at all levels of society, in social and professional circles, in favour of different age groups of the population - young, adults, elderly - to develop a prevention and preparedness "culture" in the face of the risks and dangers which can befall the individual as much as the society in which he lives.

The various actions undertaken in this field have demonstrated their efficiency everywhere in the world: it is recognised and proven to-day that information and training are the two best means of reducing the number of disasters and limiting their consequences. It is also acknowledged that the earlier the basic principles of self-protection and of responsibility in the face of disasters are inculcated, the more positive the results. Young children and adolescents are thus the target of the information and training campaigns which are regularly launched in this connection.

This statement needs to be qualified however. While the teaching of history, geography or mathematics is the object of extremely systematic pedagogical studies, it is a fact that this is not so in the case of training in risk and disaster prevention and preparedness. In this case, it is preparedness to natural disasters which is highlighted sometimes whilst domestic accidents or road safety are emphasised at other times. Finally, there are few States in which these subjects are treated in a comprehensive and ordered manner in school.

It is in this context that the International Civil Defence Organisation advocates the development of a global strategy in the field of prevention and preparedness in the face of accident and disasters, which will be based on devising and implementing adequate pedagogical programmes. Civil Defence comprises indeed all the measures aimed at preparing for, and intervening in the face of, accident and disaster situations, natural or due to man. Civil Defence must consequently be the subject of school programmes, from infant school to the end of compulsory schooling, and be taught like any other subject.

The ICDO means therefore to promote a global concept of training in Civil Defence and to collaborate to this end with the pedagogical circles concerned in developing as well as in developed countries.

This is why on the occasion of World Civil Defence Day, on 1 March 2006, the ICDO invites all countries to consider the integration of Civil Defence into school programmes.

Nawaf Al-Sleibi  
Secretary-General of the ICDO