

Czech Republic - statement for the "interactive discussion" on "Impact of natural disasters on water, sanitation and human settlements - prevention and response"

April 20, 2005

Mr. Chairman, dear Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me contribute to the discussion by presenting some experience of my country on flood management and protection. The Czech Republic has been facing several serious floods during last eight years, which caused damages over 140 bln. Czech crowns and over 90 casualties. Undoubtedly the most serious were catastrophic floods in 1997 and 2002, which affected lives of millions of citizens of our country and crossed all historical knowledge (as the probability of occurrence achieved over 500 years period!).

The floods in 1997 showed some weak points in preparedness of the State Emergency System for managing such major disasters. That lead to an extensive legislative activities and creation of the new crisis management and integrated rescue system law package. This new legislation set up a clear framework for co-operation of all main players in early warning and relief operations. The new system was successfully applied during the catastrophic floods in 2002, which lead to a great improvement in early warning and preparedness for relief operations in comparison with the floods 5 years ago. At that time we suffered the damages of almost two billion Euro and we were very thankful for any help, including international. With the aim to prevent, as much as possible, fatal consequences and aftermaths of similar catastrophic floods in future, the Czech Republic has modified the legal framework of spatial and urban planning. In general, dwellings should not be rebuilt or built in areas extremely threatened by floods. Therefore, in 2002, the Czech government launched a new programme targeted at fitting the existing municipal master plans in order to incorporate the territorial experience of recent floods into them to prevent permanent living in dangerous localities. In addition, flood protection measures were included to the planning process in the framework of "Integrated Water Resources Management" in watersheds.

The Czech Republic also actively participates in international co-operation in protection against floods based on river basin principle in the structures of the International

Commissions for protection of major rivers in Europe (Elbe, Oder, Danube), where action plans for flood protection were prepared and adopted.

To improve activities in disaster reduction, the Czech Republic established Czech National Committee for Disaster Reduction, which creates necessary basis for better coordination of disaster reduction activities within the country between various institutions from the state, private and public sectors. This Committee concentrates its activities especially on early warning, training and education of people. The committee cooperates with similar national platforms in Central Europe. Such international cooperation, to our opinion, should continuously be strengthened.

Thank you for your attention.