



The experience and knowledge of local communities are crucial to effectively reduce the risks of disasters, Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council Ambassador Vuk Žugić and OSCE Secretary General Ambassador Lamberto Zannier said today, on the occasion of the International Day for Disaster Reduction.

Recalling this year's theme, Knowledge for Life, Žugić said that traditional and local knowledge are key to reducing risks and enhancing preparedness, thereby improving security and building resilience.

"Given the impact disasters can have on the security of nations and individuals, and their often transboundary consequences, disaster risk reduction is important for the OSCE in its efforts to preserve stability and prosperity among its participating States," said Žugić.

Zannier said: "Active engagement of communities in the whole process of disaster risk reduction, better use of local knowledge and expertise, and measures adapted to local problems and needs can result in reduced vulnerabilities, improved sustainability and strengthened resilience of the society as a whole."

Zannier stated that the OSCE's work with local communities, through the network of Aarhus Centres, ensures that local knowledge is taken into account and communities are actively involved in translating into practice the priorities of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The 2014 Swiss and 2015 Serbian Chairmanships of the OSCE identified disaster risk reduction and sustainable water governance as their joint priorities. A decision on disaster risk reduction, calling on all participating States 'to incorporate local knowledge and information into national plans, taking into consideration the capabilities of both men and women', was adopted at the Ministerial Council in Basel in 2014.

*Photo by: OSCE/Micky Kroell*