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**UNU-EHS**

Institute for Environment  
and Human Security

Organising Committee of the 9th International Symposium Interdisciplinary Regional Research

Attn: Prof. Mira Miloradov, University of Novi Sad, Novi Sad, Serbia

Dear colleagues,

We live in a changing world. To preserve this world for the future of our children we, together, must strive for sustainable development - a development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising options and resources for future generations to meet their own needs. It implies environmentally sound development in a societies and regions free from threats to life and property. Human security is an essential ingredient for sustainability, increasingly threatened by extreme events, both natural and human-induced. Damages in lives lost and destroyed property are increasing in frequency and magnitude.

Increased pollution in the atmosphere is causing gradual increase of the temperature. The slowly rising sea level is threatening low lying countries with more severe storm surges and some scientists suspect that recent large floods in Central Europe are indicators of more severe hazardous events in the future. Even more dramatic are human-induced environmental changes caused by population growth, uncontrolled urbanisation and development, and regional conflicts.

They result in changes of social and cultural structures, public health, changes of land use and related phenomena and generating environmental refugees. The environment becomes increasingly endangered, especially when human encroaches on and modifies fragile environments. Cities are growing at rates which outstrip abilities of city administrations to supply necessary infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals, roads, water and sanitation supply.

If extreme hazardous events hit a population that is already weakened by a deteriorating environment, people may no longer be able to recover using their own resources but depend on external assistance. In many countries of the world existing or changing social and economic conditions make people living in rural and urban areas increasingly vulnerable and susceptible to disasters. Understanding the causes of vulnerability is a prerequisite for ensuring human security and decreasing vulnerability, but is not enough.

Working together we need to develop regional, national and local strategies for alleviating disasters: long term strategies to reduce vulnerability of the people threatened by extreme events as well as short term strategies to reduce their possible impacts, all as an integral part of sustainable development.

The complexity of the factors that determine vulnerability and ability to cope with extreme events call for improvement of the scientific basis for sustainable development and disaster risk reduction. Interdisciplinary research, education and capacity development are needed to strengthen coping capacity in the regional, national and local context. It is encouraging to have an Interdisciplinary Regional Research Symposium, such is your one. It brings scientists and educators from the Region to work together in the interdisciplinary fields of social science, economics, engineering and natural science. Only working together we can understand complexities of today's world.

Wishing you a successful Symposium and hoping it's results, conclusions and recommendations will be implemented in tomorrow's decision making in our countries.

Let's work together to build our Region and our societies free from fear, free from want and free from hazard impacts.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Dusan SAKULSKI

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