



**European Committee  
of the Regions**

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT TZITZIKOSTAS**

**PLENARY DEBATE ON NATURAL DISASTERS: RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES AND BUILDING RESILIENCE IN CITIES AND REGIONS**

**WEDNESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 4PM**

Dear Commissioner, Dear Special-Representative, ladies and gentlemen,

Today's debate is held on the International Day of Disaster Risk Reduction.

Let me share my deepest sympathy with every local leader, every community, and every person, affected by natural disasters.

I would now like to hold a one minutes silence in remembrance of everyone in Europe and across the world, who have lost their homes, loved ones or livelihoods.

Today's debate comes after a period where many of our regions, cities and villages in Europe, were severely hit by floods and fires.

From the fires in Limassol in Cyprus, in the Attica region and Evia islands in Greece, in Provence in France, and Sicily and Campagna in Italy;

to the floods in the German-speaking community and Wallonia in Belgium, and Rhineland-Palatinate and North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany.

In my home country in Greece, 11 EU member states came to our side during the summer fires, which burnt more than 1 million acres in two weeks.

More than 1,000 houses and many businesses burnt down or were severely damage.

Commissioner Lenarčič, at my invitation, you met with the Governors of the Greek Regions and our Prime Minister.

I would like to thank you again for your response and support.

It is during times of crisis that we see European solidarity. It is not only during times of crisis, but during the aftermath we need to help our regions, cities and villages.

To think over 20 years, natural disasters were connected with 77 billion Euros of economic loss in Europe alone. With climate change, natural disasters are becoming more severe and more regular.

We need to restore our natural environment and build more resilient communities.



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Dear Commissioner, Dear Special-Representative,

Let me suggest that the European Commission, UNDRR and our Committee launch a Task Force to:

- 1) review locally and regionally resilience,
- 2) identify needs and
- 3) assess the coordination between the different levels of government.

We could establish a "Regional Resilience Platform", to support local and regional authorities to strengthen their resilience, informing them of the support available and share best practices.

So that together, we are better prepared and more resilient for the future.

Commissioner the floor is yours.

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