

## TUNIS DECLARATION

**“Voluntary service within civil defence:  
an act of solidarity and citizenship”**

**adopted by the International Conference**

**“Voluntary Service and Civil defence Training at the Dawn of the 21st Century”**

**14-16 September 1999, Tunis, Tunisia**

Convened under the patronage of His Excellency Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of Tunisia, and organised jointly by the International Civil Defence Organisation (ICDO) and the National Civil Defence Office (ONPC) of Tunisia, this Conference aims at comparing the various experiments on voluntary service undertaken within civil defence bodies, and thus to define the lines along which to establish programmes for the promotion and development of voluntary service in civil defence. This Conference brought together 60 States and International Organisations 's delegations.

**We,**

***Participants at the International Conference***

***“Voluntary Service and Civil Defence Training at the Dawn of the 21st Century”***

**RECALLING** that protection of and assistance to populations and the safeguard of property and the environment are the responsibility of all and that it is, in the first instance, up to States to develop the appropriate policies and systems,

**RECALLING** the essential need to promote at world level a culture of prevention in the face of accidents and disasters of all nature,

**CONSIDERING** that, to be efficient, actions undertaken by governments in these fields must benefit from the support of the populations concerned,

**CONSIDERING** that solidarity and citizenship are fundamental values which express themselves through voluntary service so as to ensure the continuity of human societies in the face of accidents and disasters of all nature,

**1. AFFIRM** that voluntary service within national civil protection, civil defence, civil security and management of emergency situations systems is an essential requirement for strengthening their action,

**2. STRESS** the fact that recourse to voluntary service by national civil defence and assistance systems must be the object of a meticulous approach based on:

- an identification of the fields of activity to which voluntary service may bring a relevant solution in terms of prevention, preparation and intervention in the face of accident and disasters as well as of post-crisis management;
- a rigorous evaluation of the human resources needs to be met by voluntary service.

**3. EMPHASISE** the fact that the design and implementation of strategies for promoting voluntary service must be based on :

- the community's acknowledgement of the value of civil protection, civil defence, civil security and management of emergency situations systems established by States;
- highlighting the value of the activities entrusted to volunteers;
- enhancing the standing of voluntary service through social recognition of volunteers and the promotion of a spirit of responsibility, solidarity and citizenship in the face of accidents and disasters of all nature;
- promoting the individual in his capacity as volunteer, in particular by granting him access to professional training and to incentives for his commitment to the community.

**4. INVITE** States to:

- create adequate training structures for volunteers;
- define the framework status, rights, guarantees and duties of volunteers;
- establish model voluntary service contracts;
- design and implement initial and on-going training programmes for volunteers;
- promote partnership with non-governmental organisations and the private sector.

**5. REQUEST** the International Civil Defence Organisation (ICDO) as the organisation federating national civil protection, civil defence, civil security and management of emergency situations systems to propose, in collaboration with concerned organisations and institutions, and in particular the Arab Interior Ministers Council (Arab Civil Defence and Rescue Bureau), the Council of Europe and the Secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disasters Reduction (IDNDR), a charter for civil defence voluntary service.

**6. REQUEST** the ICDO to:

- assist States which may wish to establish or strengthen adequate structures for the development of voluntary service within their national protection and assistance structures in the face of disasters of all nature;
- co-ordinate at the international level the voluntary service training activities;
- encourage research relating to the promotion and implementation of voluntary service within national protection and assistance systems in the face of accidents and disasters.