

Dear Participants

Even if previous commitments do not allow me to accept the kind invitation of the ECPFE to participate in your meeting in Athens, I wish to warmly welcome you on behalf of the EUROPA Major Hazards Agreement of the Council of Europe to the workshop on "Seismic Protection of Monuments".

Cultural heritage protection against major hazards has been an important domain of work for the Agreement since its creation back in 1987. Over these 26 years of international cooperation, many activities have been developed on this specific topic mainly by its associated Centres in Ravello, Lisbon, Skopje and of course ECPFE who is hosting the workshop today.

Too often considered a marginal issue with respect to human and economic losses associated to present settlements, cultural heritage protection against major hazards has recently regained interest (and not only in Europe) as the intrinsic cultural value of such built heritage appears difficult to preserve in case of disaster, even though the technical means are available for rebuilding them.

Besides the usual threats to cultural heritage of earthquakes themselves, climate change studies have also shown that it can encompass new sources of vulnerability to cultural heritage as significant changes in weather patterns will also affect the resilience of built structures and more particularly that of historical ones.

The present workshop will thus be a good occasion to review most up-to-date ways to assess the actual vulnerability of monuments but also to discuss innovative methods to reduce that vulnerability through adequate interventions, as well as adopting a more prospective approach taking into account potential new factors with significant impact on actual vulnerability of built heritage.

To conclude, I wish you a successful meeting and I look forward to its, I'm sure, fruitful results.

Francesc PLA

Deputy Executive Secretary of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement
(Council of Europe)