

"Together, we can create a lasting positive impact on our planet"

**EUROSAI President and SAI Israel, Mr. Matanyahu Englman, Opening Address
for the EWGEA Annual Meeting (3-4/10/2024)**

Distinguished Colleagues,

It is a profound honor to welcome you all to the EUROSAI Working Group on Environmental Auditing Annual Meeting.

This gathering, whether in person in Baku or virtually, underscores our shared commitment to safeguarding our planet's future.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the Chamber of Accounts of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and to its esteemed President, Mr. Vugar Gulmammadov, for their gracious hospitality in hosting this important event.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the Supreme Audit Office of Poland, and to its distinguished President, Mr. Marian Banaś, for their exceptional leadership as Chair of the Working Group.

The theme of this year's meeting: "Extreme Weather Events & Preparedness Strategies", is critically important.

As auditors, we have a pivotal role in ensuring that public funds are used effectively to mitigate climate change risks and build resilient communities.

The cross-border nature of extreme weather events demands a coordinated global response that leverages our collective expertise and commitment to sustainable environmental governance.

To underscore the significance of our discussions, I would like to share some key findings from recent audit reports by the Israeli State Comptroller's Office:

One notable report focuses on Local Authorities Preparedness for Floods and Flooding and Their Function during the Winter of 2020. During that winter, approximately 590 cases of floods and flooding occurred, resulting in 7 tragic fatalities. In the Nahariya area, rainfall reached 250 mm in just one week, nearly 40% of the annual precipitation. Despite a decade having passed since the initiation of a flood defense plan for Nahariya, it remains incomplete. Investments in drainage infrastructure by local authorities from 2016 to 2020 amounted to NIS 172 million, while canalization levies collected during this period were NIS 55 million. 174 inquiries received by the Ashkelon Municipality's hotline during the flooding events of December 2019 underscores the urgent need for improved infrastructure.

Another crucial report is the audit on Protection Against Flood Damage. Floods constituted 49% of all natural disasters in 2019, with a dramatic 1,133% increase in flood occurrences globally from 1971 to 2019. By 2030, an estimated 132 million people worldwide are expected to be affected annually by flood damage. In Israel, the total compensation paid by insurance companies for flood damages from 2010 to 2021 was NIS 2.5 billion, while the estimated cost of necessary drainage projects is approximately NIS 6 billion.

These figures highlight the pressing need for robust preparedness strategies and timely investments in infrastructure. The audit reports, including the National Climate Action by the Government of Israel Special Report from October 2021 and the Extended Follow-up Audit Report from March 2024, stress the urgent need for comprehensive climate action plans and effective implementation strategies.

Moreover, international comparison in audit reports is essential. By examining diverse approaches and outcomes across nations, we gain valuable insights into effective practices and areas needing improvement. This comparative analysis not only enhances our audit practices but also fosters a global dialogue on best practices for environmental auditing.

I am confident that the knowledge and insights shared during this meeting will significantly enhance our audit practices and inspire innovative solutions to the environmental challenges we face.

The work of the Working Group on Environmental Auditing is essential in safeguarding the health and prosperity of future generations.

Let us make the most of this opportunity to engage in robust discussions, strengthen our collaborative efforts, and demonstrate our leadership in environmental auditing.

Together, we can create a lasting positive impact on our planet.

Thank you, and I wish you all a productive and successful meeting.