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EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT  
(EUR-OPA)

**54<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT  
CORRESPONDENTS  
24 - 25 April 2008  
UNESCO House, Bonvin Building, Room XIII, PARIS**

**CONCLUSIONS**



Mr. Maciej Nalecz, Head of the Fundamental and Engineer Sciences Division of UNESCO, welcomed the participants and emphasized the role of the Section for Disaster Reduction Natural Sciences Sector of UNESCO, headed by Mr. Badaoui Rouhban, in dealing with risk prevention issues at international level through reinforced relations with the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement.

The Chair of the Committee, Mr. Iuliu Bara, thanked UNESCO for its invitation to host the meeting on its premises and underlined that this marks the common goals of both entities. Finally, the Executive Secretary Mr. Eladio Fernandez-Galiano recalled the long lasting co-operation between UNESCO and the Council of Europe and more precisely on cultural, environmental and risk prevention issues.

## **1. ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT AGENDA**

The agenda was adopted without amendments.

## **2. PROGRESS OF ON-GOING INITIATIVES**

- Preparation of the international workshops on local authorities and risks, Kiev (22-23 September 2008) and Istanbul (27-29 October 2008)

Based on the existing recommendation on local authorities adopted at the 2006 Ministerial Session, the planned workshops wish to address more precise issues related to natural risks (e.g. earthquake risks) and technological risks (e.g. radiological issues).

Mr. Victor Poyarkov explained that the Kiev workshop will focus on the possible action, in co-operation with central government and nuclear power plants operators, of local and regional authorities to inform and protect the population. Mr. Necdet Seyfe also briefly explained that the Istanbul workshop will focus on the specific challenges (at each level of risk management) for local and regional authorities in dealing with such diverse natural hazards as earthquakes or floods. Both coordinators insist on the transboundary aspects of hazards.

Ms. Marité Moras (Congress of Local and Regional Authorities) pointed out the support of the Congress for both events but also recalled the previous important work on the topic done by the Congress. She suggested emphasising both the prevention aspect, with respect to other phases of risk management, and the role of climate change in that context in particular.

The Executive Secretariat will rework the draft announcement of the Istanbul meeting taking into account the various comments of the participants and will circulate the revised version.

- Analysis of the role of local and regional authorities in major hazard management: progress made on the study

Ms. Monique Bernaerts presented the state of advancement of the study and the remaining challenges to be addressed. The contributions already received had been analysed and some additional information will soon be required. A first remark on material received was the relative lack of diversity of the information provided as a unique entity seems to have responded while the whole range of information requested should require the contribution of many actors.

In order to diffuse the collected data, Ms. Bernaerts suggested putting the information on line on the ISPU website and to organise a presentation by a different country at each meeting of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents.

- Reactions to two recent recommendations: opinion of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents

Mr. Fernandez-Galiano recalled that other bodies of the Council of Europe (and in particular the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities) regularly issue recommendations on specific topics asking for related action from the competent entities within the Council of Europe, for example, the possible climate change impact on natural risks.

In the draft response to both recommendations, the Secretariat proposed to stress more the **prevention** effort of the Agreement, instead of focusing on the **mitigation** aspect, since each Member State is responsible for its post disaster assistance.

With regard to the transfrontier co-operation recommendation, the participants pointed out that transfrontier co-operation is one of the main characteristics of the Agreement's work and consequently take note of the recommendation. The Agreement could consider collecting previous work on the topic in a specific future document.

As the civil society role is highlighted by several participants, Ms. Nollinger (Parliamentary Assembly) confirmed that future work on the topic by the Assembly will focus on that issue. After the detailed discussion of the two draft responses, several amendments to both climate change related recommendations responses were consequently adopted (see appendices 2 and 3 for the final versions).

- Letter of interest from Belarus to accede to the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement

The Executive Secretary informed of the interest of Belarus to join and recalled that the procedure for non member States to join any Partial Agreement requires the political approval of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Permanent Correspondents were thus requested to simply advise on the more "technical" aspects of the interest of Belarus.

Delegates pointed out that former Soviet Union countries joined the Agreement before being members of the Council of Europe and that Belarus has an extended experience on risk management, in particular due to the fact that they suffered the Chernobyl accident and had implemented significant recovery programmes.

The Committee expressed a favourable opinion to the accession of Belarus, which will be transmitted for decision to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, as foreseen in the existing rules.

- Organization of a side event on cultural heritage and risk at the *International Disaster and Risk Conference* (IDRC), Davos, 25-29 August 2008

The recent contacts with the Swiss Federal Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research of Davos (Switzerland), whose president, Dr Walter Amman, is also chair of the IDRC which is organized there every two years, has lead the Agreement to organize within the IDRC 2008 a parallel session on cultural heritage and risks, where climate change issues will be also discussed. The session will include presentations by the different Centres working on this topic and will be the core participants

of a Working Group on Heritage and Risks which should propose future initiatives for the Agreement in this field.

- Higher risk education: European Day on Risk Training and Inventory on post graduate courses

The Secretariat informed the participants of the follow-up to the last Higher Education working group held in autumn 2007. Two main actions were decided: the first was to organize a European Day on Risk Training in Paris (19 May 2008) to promote co-operation among existing training courses and the second was to continue the on going inventory on existing risk related master courses in the European and Mediterranean zone. The latter project will greatly benefit from the collaboration of Permanent Correspondents to identify national curricula in the field in order to enrich the existing Inventory.

- MULTH project: Multilingual dictionaries on risk management

Ms. Greciano recalled that the idea of a multilingual glossary on risk issues had in fact emerged within the Agreement and was later completed with the financial support of the European Commission. The goal was to facilitate communication on risk issues between countries, the glossary being an essential tool for writing and /or translating documents on the topic. She pointed out that risk language is by definition interdisciplinary and requires a great diversity of vocabulary (philosophical/conceptual, usual, technical) as well as the development of expressions (instead of individual words). To this end, much existing documentation was used, amongst which many of the Agreement's documents and also the glossary developed by UN-ISDR.

The participants congratulated the team led by Ms. Greciano for their fruitful work and decided to promote its diffusion through the Agreement's website and to encourage possible extensions to other languages.

### **3. SPECIAL SESSION ON PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL PLATFORMS (NPs) FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (DRR)**

Mr. Iuliu Bara and Mr. Badaoui Rouhban (UNESCO) welcomed the participants on behalf of the Council of Europe and UNESCO. Mr. Eladio Fernández-Galiano (EUR-OPA) noted that the meeting was an opportunity to formalize co-operation among European NPs, to push the establishment of NPs and networking, including exchanges with the EUR-OPA specialised Centres. Mr. Sálvano Briceño (ISDR) hailed the close partnership with the Council of Europe and UNESCO and remarked on the overlap between DRR requirements and climate change requirements. He insisted upon a major political effort to move from disaster reaction to disaster prevention even in Europe. Mr. Karl-Otto Zentel (DKKV) gave a short overview of a European Network of NPs (including the French, German and Swiss ones) and stressed the need of National Platforms to deal with risks efficiently. He also emphasized the role of Europe, as a major international actor in development and humanitarian assistance, in DRR advocacy.

Ms. Paola Albrito (ISDR) provided information about the 'HFA Monitor on line tool' which will enable NPs and HFA focal points to collect information and share experiences on common issues. For Europe, the added value is to foster closer collaboration amongst national actors and to stimulate exchanges with international entities and with other countries that might be undertaking similar initiatives. This tool, together with the Indicators guidelines, could be useful in facilitating the work to be undertaken at national and regional levels.

Mr. Francesc Pla (EUR-OPA) gave a brief overview of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement, presented as a good example of networking between various stakeholders with common goals within a multisectoral approach. The added value of such a network is to be an interface, for example between the scientific community and civil protection, to permit sharing the necessary skills for DRR and to allow co-operation between different organizations. EUR-OPA committed to support the development of NPs in collaboration with UN/ISDR which will offer the opportunity to support workshops on how to develop and run an NP.

Ms. Albrito recalled recent developments in Europe and noted that partners are becoming more active on issues related to DRR. An increasing number of regional work plans are addressing disaster risk reduction and are supporting national activities related to reducing vulnerabilities. A number of achievements were also shown on how to mobilise resources for DRR. Further exchanges among European NPs and HFA focal points, particularly as part of the activities undertaken by a European Network of NPs, is becoming an efficient way of exchanging information, of opening a dialogue around national experiences and of moving the agenda forward at European level.

Mr. Zentel highlighted the common goals, the specific objectives and the work plan of a European Network of NPs and HFA focal points (currently formed by Germany, France and Switzerland) and presented an overview of the activities undertaken since its establishment and of planned future activities. The latter include the opportunity to raise DRR during the French presidency of the EU, to foster work on climate change adaptation and to stimulate a common European approach on DRR together with the European Commission. He also noted that on many occasions there is still a need to raise the profile of DRR at national level as well as building political commitment.

Mr. Thomas de Lannoy (European Commission) briefly presented the current strategies and future initiatives of the Commission linked to DRR: in October 2008 a specific Communication on an integrated approach to disaster prevention and the Commission is also in the process of developing a proposal for an EU Strategy for DRR in developing countries. As part of the Commission Communication "Western Balkans: enhancing the European perspective", work is underway in the Balkans and in Turkey on DRR activities in coordination with the WB and UN/ISDR within the SEEDRMAPP (South Eastern Europe Disaster Risk Mitigation and Adaptation Programme).

Mr. Alberto Monti (OECD) talked about their recent initiatives in the field of financial management of large-scale disasters but highlighted the limitations inherent to purely ex post compensation mechanisms. He emphasized the link between a clear ex ante allocation of the financial cost of disasters and the incentives to adopt cost-effective DRR measures. He suggested that the European Network could take part in the future initiatives and events organized by OECD.

Mr. Giovanni de Siervo (Italy) recalled that they are establishing an NP and appealed to a coordination of the diverse forms in which DRR is discussed as well as to a practical approach of supporting countries to implement DRR activities.

Mr. Steven Barnes (United Kingdom), in view of regional and international initiatives, asked whether there is still something left to be done at national level. Several participants pointed out that such regional initiatives cannot substitute national policies as DRR true achievements are based on a strong national legislation and system: a need for increased governments' awareness on DRR persists.

#### **4. SIGNATURE OF THE MEMORANDUM OF CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND THE SECRETARIAT OF THE INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY FOR DISASTER REDUCTION (UN/ISDR)**

Taking advantage of the holding of the Special Session jointly convened by the two institutions, the Director of the UN-ISDR Secretariat, Mr. Salvano Briceño, and the Executive Secretary of the Council of Europe's European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), Mr. Eladio Fernandez-Galiano, signed a Memorandum of Co-operation between their institutions to foster co-operation on DRR issues within the European and Mediterranean area.

#### **5. EXAMINATION OF THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN SPECIALISED CENTRES' ACTIVITIES**

- Meeting of the Directors of Specialised Centres of the Agreement (Paris, 4-5 February 2008)

The Executive Secretariat informed the participants of the decisions taken during the last annual meeting of Directors of Specialized Centres. The main decision was to change the timing of the proposals by Centres of their future activities: the participants agreed to provide such information for 2009 already in October 2008 so that they may be taken into account when the 2009 programme of activities of the Agreement will be adopted by the Autumn Session of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents. The goal is both to provide the Centres as early as possible with the resources to develop the associated activities and to achieve a better coordination of Permanent Correspondents' wishes on future activities and feasible projects within the network of Centres.

- Evaluation of the 2007 activities and examination of the activities scheduled in 2008

The Executive Secretariat briefly recalled the activities already carried out in 2007 and those planned in 2008 on the following topics:

- Education
- Vulnerability and Early Warning
- Legislation
- Prevention and Information
- Cultural heritage
- Post catastrophe actions

A general discussion on these topics was opened. The Secretariat emphasized that the main topic in 2007 had been school education, with an international workshop organized in Paphos, Crete on "*Disaster reduction at school*" while 2008 will focus on the role of local and regional authorities through the holding of the two international workshops planned in Kiev and Istanbul.

With regard to professional training, a debate on the possible setting up of courses revealed that the best option for the Agreement would be to facilitate the participation in already existing training courses, organized either by national authorities or international organizations. Furthermore, several participants highlighted the need to promote professional training on risk issues, particularly for town planners and architects who, due to their lack of knowledge, too often ignore such issues in their projects.

- Ideas for the preparation of the 2009 programme of activities

The participants welcomed the initiative to request the Centres to send in much earlier their proposals on future activities as an additional means of reinforcing the visibility of the Centres' activities for the Permanent Correspondents. They also highlighted that it will facilitate co-operation on common projects between each Centre and its own specific agenda, a wish constantly supported by the Secretariat.

Following proposals on waste management related activities, a general discussion on the pertinence of including such activities among the future topics promoted within the Agreement led to the conclusion that the storage *per se* is not a source of major risk but their possible implications in case of natural or technological disasters can justify that activities focusing on that specific aspect could be developed in the future.

Finally, the possibility of holding an exhibition/conference in 2009 on the past achievements of the Centres was discussed: if it will be useful to publicise them, the matter requires accurate fore planning as to the potential public, given that the Permanent Correspondents are already informed during their meetings.

## 6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- French initiatives on risk issues

During the forthcoming French presidency of the EU in the second semester of 2008, risk management will be one of the topics and two majors meeting will be held to support it:

- a seminar on early warning systems, to be held in Aix-en-Provence from 14 to 16 October 2008: Mr. Philippe Nardin informed that its goal is to make concrete proposals to the European Council;
- a seminar on risk prevention related to climate change, to be held in Paris from 26 to 28 November 2008: Mr. René Feunteun emphasized that the seminar will avoid taking on a scientific aspect and that its aim is to focus on other more associated approaches such as the human sciences issues or the role of NPs.

Even if primarily addressed at the 25 countries of the EU, the organizers wish to open them to neighbouring countries' participation, and in particular to EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement member States.

The participants acknowledge the importance of both meetings and ask the Executive Secretariat to publicise them through the Agreement's website.

- Contacts with non-member States

The Executive Secretary informed the participants of his recent contacts with the competent authorities from some non member States (Serbia, Slovenia, Italy) to discuss their possible future collaboration with the Agreement.

**7. DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held in Istanbul (Turkey) on 30 - 31 October 2008.

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## **Appendix 2**

### **Opinion of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) on Recommendation 1823 (2008) of the Parliament Assembly "Global warming and ecological disasters"**

After careful examination of the Parliamentary Recommendation at its meeting in Paris on 24-25 April 2008, the Committee of Permanent Correspondents:

1. Shares the concern of the Parliamentary Assembly concerning the challenges that Europe will have to face due to the expected changes in temperature and rainfall while noting that climate change should be taken into consideration in the context of global change which also includes changes in urbanisation, agriculture and forestry or spatial planning that may increase the vulnerability of populations.
2. Notes that present available knowledge predicts that climate change will intensify climate threats and will most likely cause more frequent disasters related to meteorological phenomena and will certainly increase coastal and marine risks, as well as forest fires, drought or heat waves.
3. Recalls that the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Partial Agreement, jointly with its network of Specialised Centres, are already working within its 25 member states on prevention and education issues related to natural and technological risks (in such diverse fields as forest fires, landslides or radiological risks) and starts to consider the specific effects of climate change on risks' exposure for populations.
4. Notes that, while the reduction of greenhouse gases is a necessary action to minimise the extent of global warming in the long term, adaptation to climate change to reduce risks in the medium term should receive appropriate attention by governments and the civil society. A reinforced effort in preparedness of societies will be essential to curb increasing risks, investing in risk-related sciences (geosciences, meteorology, oceanography, ecology, etc.), in developing early warning systems and more efficient response in cases of emergency.
5. Suggests that the Committee of Ministers and the governments of member States increase their efforts in protection of people from risk, by increasing resilience, promoting risk awareness through education and reducing disaster risk, integrating global change into their predictions and plans.
6. Suggests that the Council of Europe becomes more involved in the action against climate change and prevention of its effects and provides appropriate funding for the necessary programmes and activities related to early warning, risk education and post disaster assistance under the EUR-OPA Partial Agreement.
7. Suggests the Committee of Ministers encourages member States which are not yet parties to the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement to consider joining this co-operation structure so as to reinforce their action to combat the effects of climate changes.

### **Appendix 3**

**Opinion of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) on  
Recommendation 231 (2008) of the Congress on  
*“Climate change: building adaptive capacity of local and regional authorities”***

After careful examination of the Congress Recommendation at its meeting in Paris on 24-25 April 2008, the Committee of Permanent Correspondents:

1. Shares the concern of the Congress concerning the challenges that Europe will have to face due to the expected changes in temperature and rainfall while noting that climate change should be taken into consideration in the context of global change which also includes changes in urbanisation, agriculture and forestry or spatial planning that may increase the vulnerability of populations.
2. Notes that present available knowledge predicts that climate change will intensify climate threats and will most likely cause more frequent disasters related to meteorological phenomena and will certainly increase coastal and marine risks, as well as forest fires, drought or heat waves.
3. Notes that, as recognised in the Recommendation on "Local and Regional Authorities preventing disaster and facing emergencies adopted at the 11th Ministerial Session of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), Marrakech, Morocco, 31 October 2006, local and regional authorities have important competencies in certain fields (Le. spatial planning, licensing of industrial activities, housing, fire fighting, health, environment and water management) which are of fundamental importance in risk management and that the new threat of climate change recommends a reinforcement of their capacities to take preventive measures and deal effectively with emergencies.
4. Recalls that the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Partial Agreement, jointly with its network of Specialised Centres, are already working within its 25 member states on prevention and education issues related to natural and technological risks (in such diverse fields as forest fires, landslides or radiological risks) and starts to consider the specific effects of climate change on risks' exposure for populations.
5. Agrees with the Congress that while the reduction of greenhouse gases is a necessary action to minimise the extent of global warming in the long term, adaptation to climate change to reduce risks in the medium term should receive appropriate attention by governments and local and regional authorities and the civil society. A reinforced effort in preparedness of societies will be essential to curb increasing risks, investing in risk-related sciences (geosciences, meteorology, oceanography, ecology, etc.), in developing early warning systems and more efficient response in cases of emergency.
6. Suggests that the Committee of Ministers and the governments of member States increase their efforts in protection of people from risk, by increasing resilience, promoting risk awareness through education and reducing disaster risk, integrating global change into their predictions and plans.
7. Suggests that the Council of Europe becomes more involved in the action against climate change and prevention of its effects and provides appropriate funding for the necessary

programmes and activities related to early warning, risk education and post disaster assistance under the EUR-OPA Partial Agreement

**Appendix 4****List of forthcoming meetings (2008)**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Place</b>
19 May	First European Day on Risk Training	Paris (France)
25-28 August	International Disaster and Risk Conference 2008	Davos (Switzerland)
22-23 September	International Workshop "Public authorities and civil society together for a safe European nuclear future"	Kiev (Ukraine)
14-16 October	International Seminar on Early Warning Systems	Aix en Provence (France)
27-28 October	International Workshop: "For a new natural risk governance"	Istanbul (Turkey)
30-31 October	55th Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents	Istanbul (Turkey)
26-28 November	Conference on natural disaster risk reduction "From past disasters to the climate change challenges in Europe"	Paris (France)