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**EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT  
(EUR-OPA)**

**MEETING OF THE DIRECTORS OF SPECIALISED  
EURO6MEDITERANEAN CENTRES**

**5-6 February 2009  
Council of Europe Office, PARIS**

**CONCLUSIONS**



**1. Adoption of the draft agenda (AP/CAT (2009) OJ 02)**

The agenda was adopted as set out in Appendix 1. The list of participants is attached in Appendix 2.

**2. Conclusions of the meeting of Permanent Correspondents, Istanbul, 30-31 October 2008 (AP/CAT (2008) 55)**

In his introductory remarks, the Executive Secretary recalled that the meeting was held following the International Workshop "Towards a new governance of natural risks" and would like to thank the AFEM, and in particular its Director Nehir Varol, for the excellent organization of the two events. He then informed the participants of the main results of the last meeting of Permanent Correspondents in Istanbul in October 2008: the adoption of a recommendation on information and nuclear safety and the desire to promote international initiatives.

On this last point, two complementary approaches were identified: promoting national platforms as a coordination tool for actions and encourage synergy of Centres' activities to propose common strategies. Acceptance of the Centre of the Sea (Biarritz, France) as a new Centre of the Agreement constitutes a further step towards strengthening the network of Centres and expanding its expertise.

Regarding the programme of activities that has already been adopted, he recalled that last year work had focused particularly on the final resolution of the Ministerial Session on the role of local authorities while the 2009 programme will focus on areas included in the Medium Term Plan (2007-2011) but which still need to be developed before the next Ministerial Session. The Permanent Correspondents greatly appreciated receiving proposals from Centres for 2009 and hoped that this procedure be further enhanced.

**3. Evaluation of activities for 2008**

For better assessment of the proposed activities for 2009, the Secretariat gave the floor to the Centres to briefly recall their major initiatives taken in 2008 (through both the frameworks of the annual grant and the coordinated programmes) in the main areas below:

**Legislative aspects**

The Florival Centre, which acts as coordinator of the thematic group on Legislation, informed of the work developed in 2008 on the role of local authorities in risk management. From the contributions received (Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Armenia, Algeria and Greece), a first group meeting was held in December to discuss more precisely the emergency response phase and to identify the next steps for this work, taking good practices into account in more detail.

The Secretariat reported that there was participation from Centres (Belgium, Algeria, and Armenia), academics (France) as well as representatives from governments (Greece and Luxembourg). The Biskra Centre emphasized the interest of this work as a bridge between administrations and science: it must not be confined only to lawyers. The Yerevan Centre also pointed out the interest of this work for its authorities and referred to other activities (coordination of the Armenian legislation with that of the European Union, national platforms, network of local communities) as possible inputs.

The Florival Centre recognized that, given the dispersion of specialists within the competent authorities, one is led to favour a study by risk phase but stressed the need for a focal point for identifying these various interlocutors. This role should be played by the Permanent Correspondents but the low rate of return of the questionnaire on their part was noted and the idea was advanced that possible contributions from the Centres would be welcome. Some Centres remarked on the difficulty they have to perform such work since it is an official response from a country, requiring a governmental agreement on a

single official statement based on an enormous task of coordinating the responses from different sectors but with divergent visions.

To alleviate this problem, the Executive Secretary proposed to expand the partners by identifying persons in the national administrations competent in legislation topics and Mr. Vigneaux suggested that the possibility of using retired experts from ministries should be looked into. The Florival Centre proposed a more modest approach which would nevertheless enable the project to advance: continue to work with partners already identified and gradually collect additional information from those Centres wishing to collaborate.

However, the Director of the Skopje Centre questioned the ultimate utility of such work on the role of local authorities, especially in the field of prevention (usually exclusively a national jurisdiction). He stressed the confinement of local authorities to the phases of disaster management but acknowledged that the identification of best practices can be useful. In line with this, the Ravello Centre proposed to reverse the approach concerning these good practices: depart from concrete actions to assess to what extent they can be implemented in different national frameworks.

The Secretariat recalled that the Council of Europe is not aimed at the harmonisation of legislation but aims to promote ideas through mechanisms such as conventions, where each country decides to join or not. Proceeding with the collection of relevant data and then checking which are the ideas we should promote, is consistent with this approach. Like the other thematic groups, the one on legislation is primarily in charge of making technical proposals on the topic to Permanent Correspondents, who decide to promote them or not in the countries they represent: the strength of the Agreement is to have both the experts and the decision makers in the same body.

The Moscow Centre proposed therefore to review the documents in the countries and to assess their relevance to promoting them at international level: it gave the example of Russian legislation on fire safety and protection of the population. The Bucharest Centre said authorities will generally show that everything is planned while practitioners are often critical: the legislation is often good but its application is difficult. In this sense, the Chisinau Centre remarked that misunderstandings exist between different levels but the important point is the application of standards.

Apart from this general work, the Kiev Centre recalled the main conclusions of the workshop organized in September 2008 on the awareness of nuclear risks. The main proposal was the creation of an efficient network (in particular with local authorities) to fill gaps in prevention and intervention in case of accident. The TESEC, which received the mandate from the Permanent Correspondents to act as a focal point on this subject, suggested to the other Centres to submit proposals to participate in this network under construction.

## **Training**

In terms of academic and vocational training, various Centres briefly recalled the initiatives they have developed in their respective countries. The Strasbourg Centre informed of the international course on quantitative risk assessment held in Barcelona in summer 2008 with the participation of 38 students (including 8 from Eastern countries with a grant from the Agreement) and 30 teachers, which focused on discussion of concrete cases.

This last point raised the question of the scope of such training, both in terms of number and geographical spread. For logistical reasons, they are often limited to twenty participants and sometimes conducted solely in the host country language, thus limiting the dissemination of knowledge. The Strasbourg Centre announced that the presentations associated to the Barcelona course, as well as those of the previous course on a multirisk approach held in Bonn in 2006, are available in English, though not published for cost reasons. A systematic production in electronic format of the content of these trainings appears to be an effective way to expand the public liable to benefit from them.

With regard to the question from the Valletta Centre on the conclusions of the thematic group on

masters, the Secretariat reported that the meetings highlighted the need for courses which can be validated in existing university courses while still supporting innovative training, a fact which involves the identification of the already existing material. This work is ongoing and should soon lead to a directory on existing training at Master level in the domain of risk. Its originality will be to provide links to more information but also to allow users to contribute by reporting on missing training.

The Ravello Centre explained that all their training in the field of cultural heritage and risks takes this direction and is recognized as value units for some university diplomas (particularly in France and Germany). However other Centres remarked that we should be confined only to academics and the need to develop professional training exists: the Bucharest Centre evoked the training of officials to earthquakes and floods, the Yerevan Centre the training of trainers on first aid and the Baku Centre a training programme for nurses to address the shortage of doctors in case of disasters.

### **School Education**

The Cyprus Centre, as coordinator of the Be Safe Net project, presented its progress and especially the extension to new hazards as well as a redesign of the website. The Kiev Centre produced the module on radiological hazards, the Ravello Centre has developed material related to volcanic hazards and the Sofia Centre has collected information on flood risk. The Malta Centre stated its contribution to the project in the field of coastal hazards and suggested involving the Biarritz Centre to refine the material available in this specific area.

The Strasbourg Centre, which developed the pilot project on landslides which led to a definition of the standard structure for the other risks, remarked on the difficulties encountered to adapt university level material to school level. For its part, the Algeria Centre noted that, apart from its contribution to drought risk, its educational document on raising awareness of desertification is available in three languages to be integrated into the site. Similarly, the Armenia Centre announced the possibility of incorporating its work on education, developed in the context of the campaigns to raise public awareness, into the project and supports the establishment of pilot schools.

The Skopje Centre stressed the importance of this project as a means of providing teachers with reliable information in multiple languages, especially in a context where the mobility of people increases the importance of such release of information. In this sense, the Secretariat said that contributions from other Centres on risks not yet covered are welcome: books, recommendations or other material developed in one country can be adapted and disseminated after transmission to the thematic group, which acts as Drafting Committee for the project.

Faced with the development of the Be SafeNet site content, the question of its dissemination to potential users was mentioned and it was suggested that the Ministries of Education be informed of its existence via a note to Permanent Correspondents. While supporting this idea, the Executive Secretary wishes that the site be fully operational because it is very difficult to raise the interest of Ministries on projects that remain to be finalised. The Strasbourg Centre also informed that it will present the site at two important international meetings to come.

Regarding the involvement of Ministries of Education, the Baku Centre explained that they have trying for a long time with their Ministry of Education to have risk management included in the school cursus and it is only recently that a decree will introduce a specific training on safety in all schools. Nevertheless the problem of training remains: the sharing of international experience in this area would be useful and it could be done through an international conference on crisis management in schools.

### **Information and awareness**

The Yerevan Centre has continued its work on the preparation of materials necessary for the establishment of national and municipal campaigns on population awareness. Concerning the Sofia

Centre, it has continued its work on information related to the Danube through its collaboration with the Bulgarian National Radio.

### **Vulnerability / early warning**

As highlighted by the Biskra Centre, the study of vulnerability requires above all reliable mapping. The work on mapping nevertheless requires the use of the latest technology: the Sofia Centre indicated taking into account the development of GPS whilst the Tbilisi Centre remarked that Geographic Information Systems should preferably be used. However, the problem of standardization remains and it was noted that each country has its own methodology. The Strasbourg Centre has conducted a study specifically on the different methodologies used in mapping landslides: it remains to study their possible harmonisation.

Regarding early warning, the Secretariat recalled the activity of the working group on this subject which met before the conference in Bonn in March 2006 and reported that two targets are the students and the local authorities. The Biarritz Centre reported that it has produced a document specifically on coastal risks to inform the authorities. The Yerevan Centre remarked however that even if the warning system works, the response of the population remains fundamental.

### **Forest Fires**

The Freiburg Centre provided information on the training carried out on the management of forest fires which was organised for forest owners and the publication of a guide for their intention. In addition, a co-operation meeting in Skopje on the Balkan countries was organised where the important problem of the consequences of fires on land contaminated by mines or by radiology was identified. The Kiev Centre reported that this last issue was also discussed at a meeting in Kiev.

### **Cultural heritage**

The Executive Secretary recalled the organisation, in conjunction with the International Conference on Disaster Reduction in Davos (Switzerland) in late August 2008, of discussions on cultural heritage and major risks. The Centres involved in work in this field met to determine their possible contribution to the new thematic group and analysed their future collaboration. It was agreed to hold its first formal meeting in Athens in February 2009.

The Lisbon Centre informed of the publication in English of its book on the earthquake risk in the historical city of Lagos, including the methodology used. The Skopje Centre stressed its work in the field of impact simulations on religious sites and in particular its study of possible reversible measures of protection. The Athens Centre has also hosted four groups of work on cultural heritage and seismic risk, the conclusions of which will be presented at a conference in February 2009. Finally, the Ravello Centre recalled the holding of various activities, including a master level course in October 2008.

### **Seismic risk**

The Rabat Centre pointed out its work on historical tsunamis in the Western Mediterranean as well as its study on flood-related tsunamis. The Lisbon Centre confirmed that historical studies suggest that there was a tsunami in the Cadix Gulf during the great earthquake of Lisbon. In addition, Professor Vigneaux reported that tsunamis will become increasingly frequent since they are not necessarily generated by an earthquake.

### **Climate Change**

Apart from the work of the Biskra Centre on arid zones, little work from other Centres has incorporated this aspect. The Executive Secretary stressed the importance which this aspect will likely have on the prevention of risks in the future but he highlighted the need to launch innovative ideas in this area and particularly with regard to adaptation to climate change, as also stressed by the Lisbon Centre.

### **Post disaster interventions**

The Earthquake Warning System operated by the Bruyères-le-Châtel Centre as well as the Extremum assessment of the impact of earthquakes have regularly communicated their results.

#### **4. Activities planned for 2009 (AP/CAT (2009) 1 & 2)**

The Secretariat proposed to mainly discuss coordinated programmes to identify synergies between the Centres in the light of proposals that had been submitted. These were the subject of a brief presentation in accordance with the thematic structure used to examine the activities in 2008:

#### **Legislative aspects**

The thematic group meeting scheduled for June 2009 will discuss in more detail the prevention phase and the proposed network of communities on nuclear security will be promoted.

#### **Training**

At least two courses at master level (one on climate change and cultural heritage and the other on coastal hazards) will be held.

#### **School Education**

The new thematic group meeting is scheduled for April 2009 to finalise the description of the risks already drafted and to clarify the next steps in the initiative.

#### **Information and awareness**

The material for the public awareness in Armenia will be finalised and the portal project on the Danube will be implemented.

#### **Vulnerability / early warning**

Work on the identification of coastal hazards will be conducted by various Centres, as well as work on the remote control of various types of structures.

#### **Forest Fires**

The problem of forest fires in zones contaminated by landmines and/or radiation will result in a specialised course in 2009.

#### **Cultural heritage**

The meeting of the new thematic group in February 2009 will prepare the Ravello workshop on risks to the cultural heritage and climate change and the development of a document on this subject.

#### **Seismic risk**

The relationship between the occurrence of earthquakes and tsunamis will be studied and a current evaluation of advances in forecasting and prevention will be conducted.

#### **Climate Change**

The case studies related to climate change and the phenomenon of water scarcity will continue.

#### **Post disaster interventions**

The need for coordination both at national and international levels will be identified and the psychological aspects associated with these interventions will be studied.

The Secretariat noted that three of these areas (i.e. education, legislative aspects and cultural heritage) already have a dedicated thematic group. To cover other areas, it would be useful to create two new thematic groups: one dedicated to vulnerability aspects and another to intervention aspects. The goal is to have a product associated with each thematic group: for education, it is the website under

construction while for legislation, it is the study on the role of local authorities which is foreseen, but it remains to be defined for the other topics.

For the three other thematic groups, their product could be a monograph (like the document containing the proceedings of the Ministerial Session in Marrakech) on the state of knowledge of a specific topic. Given the breadth of topics which can be covered by the two new proposed groups, the discussion on their respective content in the short term began and allowed two major issues to be identified:

- Regarding evaluation, the wide experience in terms of seismicity suggests that the accumulated knowledge in this area be reviewed;
- As regards intervention, the problem of communication between teams suggests taking stock of multilingual glossaries in disaster management.

With no time to conduct a more thorough analysis, the participants agreed to inform the Secretariat as soon as possible if they wish to collaborate in the already existing working groups or in those which are considered being set up, taking into account that the latter must previously be presented to the Permanent Correspondents for approval.

As in the two previous years, an international workshop will be held in 2009: the theme is the impact of climate change on major hazards, particularly those related to water (floods, drought, but also sea level rise). The Centres were strongly encouraged to participate in this workshop, several of them wishing to make a contribution.

## **5. Preliminary discussion on activities in 2010 and 2011**

The Rabat Centre, in view of its current work on tsunamis, stressed the importance of developing basic research within the network. The Executive Secretary recognized the importance of this aspect but pointed out the difficulty for international organisations such as the Council of Europe to support them financially because of the substantial resources to be implemented. In Europe, only the European Union has sufficient funds for this and the competent authorities are prepared to consider proposals from the Network of Centres: the Agreement is prepared to support these proposals with the concerned General Directorates.

Another important aspect for the future is the development of assessments of knowledge on topics related to major risks. The Agreement should play a mediation role of scientific results to decision makers and thus make the work developed within the network of Centres understandable. As the Chair of the Programme Sub-Committee, Professor Vigneaux stressed, these scientific assessments can be progressive, enriching the initial balance as knowledge in the field develops.

Participants asked themselves how the issues related to climate change could be registered in a more sustainable way in the programme of activities as it is a topic which will increasingly gain in importance in the field of major risks. The Executive Secretary said that the workshop on climate change scheduled for October 2009 should allow the Agreement to benefit from external expertise on topics insufficiently covered by the network of Centres (such as floods) and to identify its innovative contributions on topics already covered (such as natural heritage or coastal risks).

In view of the favourable reception from the Permanent Correspondents to an advanced presentation of Centres' activities, the Secretariat informed the Centres that by the end of September they will be requested to submit their proposals for 2010 activities so they can be discussed at the meeting of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents mid October.

## **6. Other matters**

### **Enhancement of the Centres' work**

Regarding emergency management, the Moscow Centre insisted on the possibilities of a website as a

mean of disseminating the Centres' works. It could include information on emergency situations and links to related Centres' projects as well as highlight new available technologies in the field or materials for children on the proper behaviour in case of disaster (books, interactive computing games already existing in the Russian Federation). To strengthen this network, the Kiev Centre suggested to introduce in each Centre site links to other Centres' sites working on related topics.

The Secretariat explained that the EUR-OPA website has this vocation even if its development is limited due to its possibilities in terms of staff. This site is currently being updated and could be enriched with information on the activities of the Centres if the latter send them on a regular basis to the Secretariat. Nevertheless, the purpose of the Agreement's site is not to duplicate those of the Centres but to redirect as necessary to each site of the Centres as information update is easier than on the Agreement's site which is addressed to a more general audience.

### **Financial Reporting of the Centres**

The annual report to the Permanent Correspondents by Mr. Goerens, Chairman of the Audit Sub-Committee, has identified certain financial aspects of the Centres that could be improved and which would simplify the associated reporting work. It will thus be possible to meet the requests from various Centres to simplify monitoring tables and to draft specific rules relating to the accounts. To take into account all the current problems, the Centres agreed to send written requests to the Secretariat to discuss possible solutions with adequate experts.

After consulting the Audit Sub-Committee of the Agreement and the Internal Audit Department of the Council of Europe, the administrative and financial applications for grants will be reviewed to reduce the delays and to specify related activities to be implemented. The Secretariat recalled that the auditing process is not confined to examining the financial aspect of a Centre but that it also evaluates the actual work done by a Centre in order to make proposals for the future. A five year audit cycle is now in place.

### **7. Date and place of next meeting**

The Directors decided to hold their next meeting in Paris in early February 2010. Two full days should be reserved for this meeting so as to allow a more in-depth consideration of the programmes in view of the Ministerial Session of the Agreement to be held late 2010.

**Appendix 1**

**MEETING OF THE DIRECTORS OF SPECIALISED EURO-MEDITERRANEAN CENTRES  
OF THE EUR-OPA MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT  
Thursday 5th February (9.30 a.m.) - Friday 6th February 2009 (6.00 p.m.)  
Council of Europe Office, 55 avenue Kléber, PARIS 16e**

**AGENDA**

1. Adoption of the draft agenda *AP/CAT (2009) OJ 2*
  
2. Conclusions of the Permanent Correspondents' meeting of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement held in Istanbul on 30-31 October 2008 *AP/CAT(2008) 55*
  
3. Assessment of activities developed in 2008
  - Activities within the annual grant framework
  - Activities within the coordinated programmes framework
  
4. Activities scheduled for 2009
  - Implications of the adopted programme of activities *AP/CAT(2008) 36*
  - Activities within the annual grant framework *AP/CAT(2009) 1*
  - Activities within the coordinated programmes framework *AP/CAT(2009) 2*
  
5. Preliminary debate on activities in 2010 and 2011
  - A mid-term evaluation of the Medium Term Plan 2007-2011 *AP/CAT(2006)47 rev*
  - Proposals to be submitted to the Permanent Correspondents
  - Implications on future activities of the Centres
  
6. Other business
  - Enhancement of the activities of the Centres
  - Financial reporting of the Centres
  
7. Date and place of the next meeting

**Annexe 2****LIST OF PARTICIPANTS/ LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS****Algeria / Algérie**

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