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EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT
(EUR-OPA)

**Improving the work and efficiency of the Agreement
in particular through the streamlining of the work of the
network of Specialised Centres with the new
Medium-Term Plan 2011-2015**

Document prepared by the Executive Secretariat of the
European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA)

1. Introduction

At the Ministerial Session of the Agreement, held in September 2010 in St Petersburg (Russian Federation), a new Medium-term Action Plan 2011-2015 was adopted (see appendix 1 to this document).

At the previous meeting of Permanent Correspondents in Paris (Spring 2010), a strong wish was manifested by a number of States to have a full overview of the activities of the Agreement since the previous Ministerial meeting of the Agreement in 2006 Marrakech (Morocco).

At the meeting of the Permanent Correspondents in St Petersburg, the Secretariat presented a comprehensive view of all programmes and activities carried out in the previous 4 years (document AP/CAT (2010) 21) and also a new brochure summarising both the purpose, reach and technical work of the Agreement, as well as its synergies with other processes and international bodies in the field of disaster risk reduction.

Based on that overview and taking into account the new Medium Term Plan, the need to examine, at a further meeting, the working methods of the Agreement and more particularly, the work of the network of Specialised Centres, in view to aligning the whole of the work of the Agreement with the priorities set, increasing the visibility of the action of the Agreement and creating further synergies among the different Specialised Centres.

To examine the working methods of the Agreement, the Executive Secretariat, under the instructions of the Chair and Vice-chair of the Agreement, created a small working group that met in Paris twice (on 17 February and 10 March 2011) to make precise

proposals to be submitted to the April meeting of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents.

The Group was composed of Permanent Correspondents (from the governments of France, Croatia and Belgium), Directors of the Centres (from Armenia, Ukraine and Morocco), the Chair of the meeting of Directors, the Chairs of the Programme and the Audit Committees, as well as the Executive Secretary and Deputy Executive Secretary. The choice of persons aimed at favouring a variety of opinions and a good expertise on the way the Specialised Centres work.

The debate of this working group was very rich in ideas and suggestions. Most of them have been incorporated in point 3) below, which is the result of a collective reflection exercise.

The main finding was that, although the present working methods and the attribution of funding to activities - the result of a complex development of the Agreement over the years - was not an unreasonable one, it was necessary to proceed to a progressive change to improve transparency, accountability, efficiency in the use of resources, visibility of results and a greater coherence with the objectives and priorities of the Agreement and the needs of its members States.

The Centres have been pivotal in the development and disaster reduction action of the Agreement but needed to better plan activities, increase synergy between them, avoid the dispersion of resources and devote more efforts to publicise results. The system of fixed, small grants to Centres was no longer justifiable as resources get dispersed and are not attached to results. Concentration of resources could permit joining forces with other Centres of expertise, governments interested in the development of some programmes and the private sector where applicable.

The working group invited the Executive Secretariat to present these new ideas, to invite all the structures of the Agreement to apply them in their field of competence (including the Committee of Permanent Correspondents, its Bureau, the Specialised Centres, the meeting of Directors and the Executive Secretariat).

The working group considered appropriate to present, for consideration of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents and possible approval, a “*Draft Decision on the use of the operative budget of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA)*” (appendix 2 to this document) considering that, although not all problems may be solved by clear rules on the use of the budgetary means of the Agreement, the proposal put forward can help the objectives of improving working methods.

In the draft decision some criteria are presented to assess the projects presented by the Centres (under point G). These criteria should not be taken as exclusive, in the sense that projects will not be financed if they do not meet all criteria, but rather as positive points for an evaluation. The Group also suggested that the Committee of Permanent Correspondents highlight a certain number of fields for each two years-period and made a few proposals for the period 2012-2013 (see appendix 3 to this document).

The Executive Secretariat presented the main conclusions of the working group to the meeting of Directors of Specialised Centres, who were in general favourable to the new methods proposed, as they understood that the evolution of the work of the Centres necessitated the changes proposed.

2. Present working methods of the Agreement

The present working methods of the Agreement are the result of a complex history in which the Specialised Centres played a key role in encouraging governments to join the Agreement, at a time where a relatively small network of Centres received, comparatively, far higher funding from the Agreement. The network of Centres was designed to bring expertise in many different topics and the Agreement was seen as a main source of finance.

Basically the different roles of the bodies of the Agreement consist in :

- a governmental Committee of Permanent Correspondents which has a political leading role and supervises (supported by its Bureau) the implementation of the priorities set by the Ministerial Sessions
- a network of Specialised Centres that make proposals on scientific, technical, training or awareness activities on disaster risk reduction
- an Executive Secretariat that serves both bodies, implements directly part of the programme of activities through the organisation of working groups, is involved in other activities carried out in cooperation with other international organisations, oversees and follows very closely the implementation, budgetary accountancy and results of the work of the Centres (supported by the Audit Committee and, as necessary by the Chair of the Programme Committee).

The Executive Secretariat also maintains a web site, takes care of compliance of all procedures with Council of Europe rules and maintains a capacity of proposal for new activities for submission to the Committee of Permanent Correspondents.

Resources provided by governments are approved on an annual basis by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and are used for staff, organisation of statutory meetings, travelling of Executive Secretariat and some government experts or directors,

audit activities, maintenance of the European Alert System and EXTREMUM (financed only partially through the Agreement) and a more action oriented “operative budget”.

The operative budget is at present fractioned into roughly two halves:

- one that provides (relatively modest) “fixed grants” to 21 Centres (out of the 27 in the network)
- the other that pays for “coordinated programmes”, which are activities or projects, carried out by one or several Centres (more often one than several).

Grants pay for maintenance of Centres or its ruling bodies, travelling of directors, meetings and other technical or scientific activities in the field of competence of each Centre. Resources for coordinated programmes pay for groups of experts organised by the Executive Secretariat, collaborative action with other organisations (e.g. promotion of National Platforms for DRR, participation in ventures such as the Partnership for Environment and DRR, training of psychologists for intervention after disasters, etc) and also for activities and projects presented by the Centres.

Proposals are received annually by the Executive Secretariat, assessed for scientific, technical and budgetary soundness, presented to the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives for comment and, after acceptance, implemented by the Centres with support and scrutiny from the Executive Secretariat.

3. Some ideas for improvement of working methods

a) Match the needs of countries and priorities

The present system does not ensure enough that the activities made by the Centres are in line with the priorities of the Ministerial Session - or specific needs having been

identified by governments -, especially in the use of grants. Even if most directors of Centres play the game honestly and try, within the sphere of their expertise, to follow priorities, sometimes other considerations are more important. The Executive Secretariat tries to influence proposals in a constant dialogue with the Centres, but is also handicapped by the modesty of the sums provided, which do not permit to be in a strong negotiation position.

Notwithstanding the modesty of the sums provided, most directors find that their integration in the network of Specialised Centres gives them two important values (apart from the resources): one is the labelling of their centres as “European and Mediterranean Centres” attached to an international organisation such as the Council of Europe, the other is being part of a network of expertise in DRR that offers interesting contacts in many fields of expertise and in many different States.

It is suggested to discontinue “grants” (too dispersed now and with limited relevance as based mainly on geographical reasons) to concentrate all resources on “coordinated programmes” comprising activities and projects that will be assessed according to their topics’ relevance with the priorities of the Agreement or specific needs and interest of Member States.

b) Increase the European and Mediterranean dimension of projects

Present dispersion of resources does not favour significant transversal work among several Centres, even those dealing with the same topic or hazard. Many Centres can find common projects around some DRR issues, but so far they have not shown much interest in doing so because of the difficulties in carrying out common tasks together. This is clearly something that can and must change.

It is suggested that common projects presented jointly by a few Centres (even if each individual Centre may, at a later stage, carry out a part of the common project), be regarded as adding value to the results and coherence of the network of Centres and thus be considered under a favourable light. As these projects will require a more substantial funding, they are also more likely to be able to find additional sources of funding (from governments, or other sources). Needless to say, this does not exclude some Centres from continuing to present projects on very specific issues (where they may be the only Centre in the network on that topic) but with a clear international added value.

It is also suggested that Centres present more projects with a European and Mediterranean dimension (i.e. that they do not have a purely local or national character). The mapping of a certain risk in one country of the Agreement, for instance, may be of use to that State but it has little added value to other States, unless an “exportable” innovative methodology is used. It is also suggested that projects covering several States, having a multidisciplinary character or covering several hazards should be seen as meriting closer attention. A multi-state project can also make it easier to find additional resources and contributes to the coherence of the network.

c) Improve planning and gather external resources and expertise

The problem with many projects or activities is that they are developed over a short period of time and there is no clear evidence of their impact on disaster risk reduction. Sometime activities help maintain the coherence and communication of existing networks of experts researching on a particular risk and it is much easier to see, from year to year, a certain “line of research” around topics of interest for DRR.

This is not a problem restricted to the Agreement. The Council of Europe has felt that having “one year programmes” attached to the budgetary calendar of the Organisation

(which states that budgets are voted every year) may become a problem by lack of continuity in action. The Council of Europe has decided in 2011 to pass to a system of two-year budgeting as from 2012-2013 (even if formally there will still be an annual approval of budgets) that permits to better plan and carry out activities.

It is suggested that the EUR-OPA Agreement also adopts a two year budgeting and that projects and activities of the Centres are also presented for development over two or more years, if this is feasible. This would permit a project to develop work in different phases, improve planning and implementation of projects and also foresee results at various stages of the activity. It is also recommended that multi-year projects include an annual reporting to facilitate a better follow-up of the activity by the Executive Secretariat and the Committee of Permanent Correspondents.

A longer duration of the project/activity should also facilitate the search for additional funds (in governments or other sources) and the involvement of other partners (for instance other technical centres of expertise – not necessarily in the network of Specialised Centres). In this way the meagre funds of the Agreement might be complemented by other sources, making projects more consistent and significant and thus more attractive to potential donors. It is suggested that Centres look for outside partners, including government agencies, and approach them for presenting more substantial – and hopefully, better financed - activities.

It is also suggested to make an assessment of the evolution of the activities of the Centres over the years and to evaluate whether the Centres and their main orientation are still in line with the needs of the Agreement and the priorities set by the Medium Term Action Plan 2011-2015, and to make appropriate recommendations. In that context it would also be useful to identify whether the Centres find that there is an added value of

being integrated in the Agreement and, likewise, how states parties of the Agreement value the contribution of the Centres to its work and priorities.

d) Improve presentation of results and visibility

The results of certain projects and activities carried out in the framework of the Agreement are now far from clear. Even if the Executive Secretariat gathers synthetic information from each project and presents it to the Committee of Permanent Correspondents in the form of summary documents, this does not appear to be sufficient to ensure clarity. It is suggested that the projects/activities have better defined “deliverables” and that their presentation is somehow homogenized, so that governments may have a clearer idea of the work developed.

One of the present weaknesses of the Agreement is that the very interesting work carried out by the Centres in their different spheres of expertise is much dispersed in many different publications, some printed by the Centres, some by the Council of Europe, some published only online, some presented in other scientific fora or Conferences of specialised character which are not necessarily attended by practitioners from governments. The final result is that there is no clear visibility or “return” to governments for the funds invested in these projects, creating a sense of opacity and losing many good opportunities to enhance the usefulness of the work done and the image of the Agreement.

It is suggested that projects and activities carried out in the Agreement are publicised both on the Agreement’s web site and, where existent, on the Centres’ web sites. In addition, it would be necessary to foresee, in the budget of the projects, some funding for the translation of summaries of results into the two official languages of the Agreement and request them from project managers.

e) Foster communication between Permanent Correspondents and Specialised Centres

The communication between the Centres and the Committee of Permanent Correspondents is relatively good at present, but can be improved. Existing mechanisms of communication are the following:

- at least a third of the States in the Agreement are regularly represented at the Committee of Permanent Correspondents by directors of Centres;
- in every meeting of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents the work of one or two Specialised Centres is presented by their directors;
- the Chair of the Meeting of Directors of Centres is invited systematically to the meetings of Permanent Correspondents;
- in the last six years there has been a meeting of directors and two seminars (mainly attended by directors) organised “back-to-back” to the meeting of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents;
- progress in the work of the Centres is presented at least once every year to the Committee of Permanent Correspondents.

The Executive Secretariat is thus invited to integrate more both Directors and Permanent Correspondents in existing working groups. It is also suggested that meetings held “back-to-back” between the two bodies are privileged and that both Permanent Correspondents and Directors of Centres contact each other more often at national level.

At the national level, it is also suggested that both governments and directors of Centres increase communication efforts and keep each other respectively informed of their action and priorities, so that contacts between some Centres and their own governmental authorities does not necessarily rely in meeting in the framework of the Agreement, but in a more fluent, direct communication. It is also suggested that Centres be aware and

participate, as appropriate in the work of the National Platforms for disaster risk reduction (where they exist) so that they can offer their technical expertise and also benefit from the multi-stakeholder approach of national Platforms.

f) Keep flexibility in the application of criteria

The suggestions above are aimed at improving the quality and consistency of the work of the Centres and at integrating more efficiently in their work the priorities defined by governments. They are not intended to exclude the activities of any of the Centres, so the guidance above will have to be applied flexibly, trying more to obtain a progressive change in orientation that a discouragement of the Centres input into the Agreement.

It is suggested that both the Executive Secretariat and the Bureau apply the rules in appendix in a flexible manner, so that Centres have time to adapt, look for new technical partners that may help them to embark in more consistent and ambitious projects and also search for supplementary financial sources. It is suggested that the decisions of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents are transmitted without delay to the Centres and the Executive Secretariat and, where appropriate, national governments, explain the new orientations. A special effort of communication will be requested from the Executive Secretariat.

4. Council of Europe internal audit suggestions

Concerning the grants agreed by EUR-OPA to the Centres for specific action, the Council of Europe audit recognises that the absence of a procedure and formal criteria in the attribution of grants is a problem to be solved, even if the existence of “customary practice” (i.e. that the funds are given to the network of Centres, that the Executive

Secretariat requests reports on the expenditure and bills, and the positive role of the audit committee) and the relatively modest amount of funds alleviates the problem.

The audit recommends maintaining a certain flexibility in the process of attributing funds but to better formalise the criteria for their provision. The audit suggests the adoption of rules fixing the criteria for funding to specific projects or Centres. Given the relatively small amount of resources involved, they do not recommend setting up a specific committee entrusted to distribute these funds, but rather to better formalise the conditions for their request (deadline for presentation of projects, delimiting responsibilities in the roles of Executive Secretariat and the Committee of Permanent Correspondents).

The audit recommends replacing the system of fixed grants to Centres by a system of project funding exclusively, so that funds would only be used for activities and no longer a share of the running costs of Centres.

More strategically, the audit suggests that projects avoid the present dispersion and focus on a number of priority issues for the Agreement, which would permit the Agreement to better align the activities and projects with the political priorities of the Council of Europe in disaster risk reduction.

Appendix 1

MEDIUM TERM PLAN 2011 – 2015

Working together in Europe and the Mediterranean for the prevention of disasters, preparedness and response

**adopted at the 12th Ministerial Session of the European and Mediterranean
Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA),
Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation, 28 September 2010**

INTRODUCTION

The impact on people, property, livelihoods, heritage and the environment of natural and human-caused disasters has grown in Europe and the Mediterranean over the last ten years. While the increased vulnerability of our societies to disaster is partly the result of inappropriate urban planning, more intensive land use, environment degradation and insufficient preparedness, climate change seems to be causing a rise in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events resulting in more drought, heat waves, wildland fires, storms, floods and coastal catastrophic events.

European and Mediterranean governments have much improved in recent years their response capacity to disasters, increasing their co-operation and developing new mechanisms of coordination and mutual help in case of emergencies. International co-operation is proving an efficient tool to facilitate access to aid and expertise, to mitigate the effects of disasters and to speed recovery. Reduction of vulnerabilities and improved preparedness of societies is proving a far more complicated task because it involves a considerable number of actors including experts, decision makers and the public who are not necessarily aware of all potential risks.

The European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), created as an open co-operation group by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 1987, is an appropriate tool to forward the Disaster Risk Reduction agenda in Europe and the Mediterranean. In its twenty three years of existence, the Agreement has promoted at European and Mediterranean scales, co-operation on prevention, preparedness, response and relief on major disasters owing to a number of political and technical strategies such as:

- the development of disaster risk reduction guidance to inspire and promote appropriate policies and improve governance of prevention and response;
- the development of knowledge-based technical instruments to assess and reduce vulnerability through science, education and training;
- the promotion of a coordinated regional approach in operational mechanisms to ensure effective response, rapid assessment of the effects of disasters and support to victims.

The activities of the Agreement receive their political support from a number of international initiatives:

- The Hyogo Framework of Action 2005-2015 “Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters”, adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in January 2005 in Kobe (Hyogo,

Japan). The Hyogo Framework of Action provides guidance at world level for preparing societies to disasters limiting their effect on people, the economy and the environment and improving response and recovery. The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) is in the process of a mid-term review of the Hyogo Framework of Action, assessing its effectiveness and proposing new fields of work. Such preparatory work has been integrated as appropriate in the present Medium Term Plan.

- The Council of Europe included in its Action Plan (Warsaw Summit 2005) the strengthening of the security of European citizens. The Heads of State and Government of member States of the Council of Europe instructed the Organisation to further develop and support integrated policies in the field of prevention and management of natural disasters in a sustainable development perspective.

With regard to the technical aspects, the activities of the Agreement are supported *inter alia* by the following input:

- scientific and technical work developed by the 27 specialised Centres integrated in the network of European and Mediterranean Specialised Centres of the Agreement;
- the reports prepared by consultants to meet the specific requests of its governance bodies;
- the contributions from governments of member States on projects or research of particular relevance to other States;
- the information compiled by working groups created under the Agreement to examine technical matters of common interest;
- the collaboration projects carried out by other national and international bodies in disaster risk reduction, in particular with the International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction and the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The objective of this Medium Term Plan is to provide a political and technical instrument containing priorities and guidelines for the action of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) for the next five years, improving its effectiveness in a context of moderate financial resources and increased vulnerability of European and Mediterranean societies.

PRINCIPLES APPLIED

1. It is essential that disaster risk reduction activities within the Agreement cover the whole disaster management cycle. Thus priorities set for **rapid response** have to be matched with those of **reduction of vulnerability**, not only through science and engineering but also **involving communities** through education and empowerment and promoting **preparedness** at all levels.
2. The Agreement will continue to streamline its action with other Council of Europe political priorities and will maintain and strengthen its co-operation with the Council of Europe Development Bank, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.
3. Co-operation with other international organisations is a key element of future work, strengthening synergies and avoiding duplication of work. Special efforts will be made towards strengthening collaboration with the European Union and to fulfil with specific action the Memorandum of Co-operation signed with UN-ISDR in 2008, becoming a regional body to promote the implementation of the Hyogo Framework of Action 2005-2015 in Europe and the Mediterranean. On-going collaboration with UNESCO in the field of education and awareness to risk will be continued and reinforced. The Agreement will also be attentive to building up a good partnership with the Union for the Mediterranean as well as with regional European and Mediterranean organisations involved in disaster risk reduction.
4. The new Medium Term Action plan will focus its attention in a limited number of fields of action linked to the implementation in the geographical space of the Agreement of the Hyogo Framework of Action (following its mid-term review in 2010).

These will include:

- improving values, law and governance: new policies for disaster risk reduction and promoting education and risk awareness;
 - using science and technical co-operation to assess risks, reduce vulnerability and improve resilience of societies;
 - ensuring early warning, efficient response and attention to victims.
5. The statutory organs of the Agreement (Committee of Permanent Correspondents, Bureau and network of Specialised Centres) will improve their synergies and streamline their activities to increase their efficiency. Openness to collaboration with non-member States and other partners will ensure a greater visibility of the Agreement's activities in other fora.
 6. Concerning the governance of the Agreement, national platforms for disaster risk reduction and the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction will be closely associated to the work of the Agreement and will become privileged partners of its action.
 7. The network of Specialised Centres of the Agreement will be maintained and reinforced as necessary, making sure that they provide the technical support needed to fulfil the disaster risk reduction objectives and goals set by member States. Funding by the Agreement to Specialised Centres will focus on projects identified as priority fields of action.

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

I. FOCUSING ON PREPAREDNESS FOR EMERGENCIES: USING INFORMATION TO SAVE LIVES AND HELP VICTIMS

The limited financial means of the Agreement do not permit it to mobilise relief efforts in case of emergencies, nor to develop operative actions when disasters occur. Yet decisions in emergency situations much depend upon the information available for managers and the population, upon the previous development of effective early warning systems, upon the rapid damage assessment and upon the training of rescuers, doctors and upon the psychological attention given to victims of disasters. The latter is an area in which the Agreement has proven expertise. The following aspects could be of interest:

Using information to assess the magnitude of events, to alert the population and to promote communication between governments during emergencies

The Agreement will promote the development of early warning systems permitting a rapid response and it will support efforts to improve their effectiveness and universality.

The Agreement will help maintain the European Warning System at the Euro-Mediterranean Seismological Centre and will promote other information exchanges between different States in case of emergencies which, due to their dimension, may affect more than one State or for which national response may not suffice. It will promote co-operation of States in events, for example during catastrophic flooding, which may affect several countries, with a special emphasis on transboundary assistance.

The Agreement will promote regional cooperation among neighbouring States which may share common risks and for which coordinated regional policies on specific issues may help improve resilience or facilitate an efficient management of emergencies.

It will promote the maintenance and information update of the EXTREMUM data base which permits rapid assessments of predicted damage in the minutes following an event, particularly in the case of earthquakes. This post disaster assessment will be communicated to the concerned authorities as well as to governments of

the Agreement which may have capabilities to deploy if so requested, thus helping decision making during events.

Promoting disaster medicine and psycho-social preparedness

The Agreement will promote exchange of experiences and procedures and dissemination of best practice in disaster medicine and psycho-social help to victims of disasters, reinforcing co-operation with the appropriate professional associations.

Particular effort will be devoted to the training of specialists for emergencies, to the establishment of networks of experts and, when required, to the analysis of events to assess what procedures have worked and which ones need to be improved, and to improve psychological preparedness of populations to disasters.

II. USING KNOWLEDGE TO REDUCE VULNERABILITY

The Agreement has acted since its creation as a laboratory of ideas and a platform for communication and exchange of scientific and technical information on hazards, vulnerability and possible solutions to improve the resilience of societies to potential disasters. This work will continue using the strengths of the governments involved, the network of Specialised Euro-Mediterranean Centres and the technical knowledge and experience gathered by national platforms for disaster risk reduction, as well as input from other international bodies. The following fields of special concern can be identified in this context.

Promoting research and use of knowledge in disaster risk reduction

The Agreement will continue to favour exchange of knowledge and experience on particular events having affected their parties and on the lessons learnt from recent or past disasters. This will concern both how prevention measures worked – or failed to be effective – and how response was organised. Information on the request and effectiveness of international aid will be relevant in this context.

Particular efforts will be devoted to promoting research and to supporting improvement of the technical expertise of the network of Specialised Centres, to favouring exchange of knowledge amongst them and to favouring transversal projects involving several countries. Priority subjects will include earthquake risk assessment, earthquake engineering, floods, drought, heat waves, landslides and other geomorphological hazards, marine risks, snow avalanches and forest fires. Research leading to prevention plans will be carried out. Special attention will be paid to the compilation and analysis of updated information on a particular subject with the aim of presenting to the Committee of Permanent Correspondents specific “state-of-the-art” reports which may serve as guidance for further research on disaster risk reduction.

Evaluating and mapping risk and using information in spatial planning

Assessing and mapping risks, as an integral part of prevention, will continue to be promoted, as well as new methodologies and techniques in the field, particularly multi-hazard mapping, remote sensing and space-based technologies. Priority will be granted to the promotion of the use of risk information into spatial planning and the assessment of risk both to new developments and to re-assess the vulnerability of existing homes or infrastructures from known or emerging risks. The Agreement will promote the assessment of the manner in which risk mapping by States takes into account climate change and other emerging risks.

The Agreement will continue to promote the reduction of vulnerability of buildings in seismic areas and the retrofitting of public buildings such as schools or hospitals and key infrastructures, thus favouring exchange of experiences and dissemination of best practices. Efforts will continue to promote and disseminate disaster-resistant building methods and to keep improving building codes in seismic areas. Work focusing on assessing vulnerability of cultural heritage to earthquakes, floods and marine risks in a context of climate change will be pursued.

Improving environmental resilience and assessing increased risk from climate change

The Agreement will examine how climate change may affect a number of hazards related to climate variables (floods, landslides, drought, heat waves, marine risks, forest fires) and how these affect the vulnerability of populations. Particular attention will be devoted to the interaction of risks with a view to identifying areas under special risk from a changing climate. For instance drought–forest fires may cause repetitive degradation and erosion making certain areas more prone to catastrophic floods.

The Agreement will promote practical work and appropriate policy coordination between climate change and disaster risk reduction, favouring adaptation to climate change to reduce vulnerabilities in related policies (water management, health, spatial planning, agriculture and environment).

Particular attention will be allotted to promoting a safer more sustainable management of ecosystems as a condition for more resilient natural cycles. Relationships between disasters and environmental degradation will be explored and remedial action proposed.

Using knowledge to train specialists

The Agreement will continue to work on the use of knowledge provided by risk sciences to improve resilience and preparedness. It will thus support the promotion of appropriate masters concerning risks and the training of rescuers and specialists involved in the different aspects of the disaster cycle. The Agreement will look for a greater involvement of universities, of expertise and facilities emanating from the different schools of civil protection and where possible from the network of Specialised Centres of the Agreement. Particular effort will be made in this context to reach local and regional government officials, planners and, where possible, decision makers, encouraging them to acquire knowledge on disaster risk prevention and in particular on the identification of local risks, on early warning and on the management of emergency situations.

Preventing technological risks

The Agreement will continue to promote work aimed at improving attentiveness and preparedness for technological risks, both those resulting from industrial activities and radiological installations as well as from transport and dumping of hazardous substances, including radioactive materials. Improvement of regulations and best standards are to be promoted. Particular effort will be devoted to the creation of networks of specialists, gathering knowledge and communicating technological risks to decision makers, including the local and regional levels.

III. PLACING PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF DISASTER RISK REDUCTION: IMPROVING PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS AND PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNANCE.

Human values and attitudes are at the heart of disaster risk reduction. The way in which people and societies perceive risks conditions the political attention given to disasters and influences its governance. A proper consideration of ethical and social aspects is fundamental to improving preparedness, as vulnerable populations are likely to be less fortunate and less informed.

The following fields of action will be covered by the Agreement:

Promoting efficient disaster risk reduction policies

In keeping with Resolution (87) 2 setting up the Agreement, it will continue to work in the political spheres as an intergovernmental co-operation group for the prevention of and preparedness for major natural and technological disasters and in the management and organisation of relief in emergency situations. As such it will continue to ensure that disaster risk reduction receives high political priority and appropriate resources at national level, at the Council of Europe and in other international fora. It will also promote improvement and update of prevention preparedness and response policies, publicise good practice and serve as a platform for exchange of experiences and ideas. The Committee of Permanent Correspondents will continue to fulfil its central role in directing the work of the Agreement.

Improving governance of disaster risk reduction

The Agreement will continue to promote best policy and law and analyse legislation of member States relevant both to preparedness and prevention policies and to management of emergencies and recovery. Exchange of information on international standards will continue, with the idea of encouraging States to update, if necessary, their laws and policies. The role of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents in recommending appropriate policy and practice will be maintained.

Special attention will be devoted to the strengthening of institutional arrangements for disaster risk reduction and the need to involve all levels of government and to improve coordination, particularly with local and regional authorities which already have great competency in the field. Promotion of the important role of local and regional authorities in disaster risk reduction will be continued, also examining aspects of the financial and institutional needs. Networks of local and regional authorities for specific problems will be promoted.

The Agreement will promote the involvement of the civil society in all fields of disaster risk reduction, especially those of concerned non-governmental organisations and those formed by volunteers that support authorities during emergencies and contribute to the preparedness of populations.

The Agreement will also continue promoting the creation of national platforms, supporting as appropriate States which want to create them and helping their networking in the framework of the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Special attention will be paid to further integrating the activities of the national platforms into the work of the Agreement and to establishing useful synergies with the activities carried out by the Centres so that exchanges of experiences and information may benefit all.

Improving resilience and preparedness through education and awareness

The building of a culture of risk reduction is to remain a priority of the Agreement as well informed populations protect themselves better against risks and can cope more efficiently with danger in an emergency. The Agreement will continue to promote national initiatives and campaigns, exchange of experiences, dissemination of useful educational material, pilot projects aimed at children or other vulnerable groups and will elaborate new materials as teaching aids, to be carried out in the framework of the BeSafeNet project. The data base is to be extended both in content and in languages.

The Agreement will also promote the elaboration of appropriate risk awareness publications, web and multimedia materials, participate in international campaigns and liaise with interested governments and agencies at European and Mediterranean levels for the promotion of such campaigns. In this context, the Agreement will also work with the media to encourage their *positive* role in making people aware of threats and in supporting authorities to convey accurate and useful information during emergencies.

A particular effort will be devoted to better publicising the work of the Agreement to gain visibility and support for its activities.

Taking care of ethical aspects

The Agreement will promote work on ethical principles, rights, duties and protection of people affected or threatened by disasters as a means to improve the resilience of populations and facilitate the respect of human dignity and rights in emergency situations, linking as appropriate with other Council of Europe work on ethics, human rights and non-discrimination. Special attention will be given to victims and vulnerable groups. Work will deal both with general principles and rights and with guidance on operative procedure in case of emergencies. In addition the Agreement will promote appropriate participation of the public in disaster planning and management and also the networks of volunteers for emergency situations.

Appendix 2

Draft Decision on the use of the operative budget of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA)

The Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement

Wishing to improve the efficiency in the use of the resources of the Agreement;

Recognising the good work of the Network of Specialised Centres of the Agreement as a fundamental aspect of the action of the Agreement;

Aiming to improve the coherence of the Network of Centres, the visibility of their technical work and its consistency with the priorities set up by the 2010 Ministerial Session;

Desirous to improve the synergy of action between the Centres and the Committee of Permanent Correspondents;

Recognising that the transparency and efficiency in the use of the budgetary means of the Agreement is an important way, but not the only one, to achieve those goals;

Taking note of the observations and suggestions made by the Council of Europe audit on the use of the budgetary resources of the Agreement;

Wishing to align itself with the practice of two-year budgets now applicable to the whole Council of Europe;

INSTRUCTS the Executive Secretariat and the Bureau of the Committee to apply the following criteria in the use of the operative budget of the Agreement:

1. Operative funds will be used for the funding of the following activities:
 - A. Statutory meetings of the Agreement
 - B. Working groups created by the Committee of Permanent Correspondents to carry out specific tasks¹
 - C. Seminars organised by the Executive Secretariat to implement specific concerns or decisions of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents
 - D. Activities carried out in cooperation with other international organisations implementing specific concerns of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents²
 - E. Payment for services provided by Specialised Centres involved in the European Warning System³
 - F. Audit activities of the scientific quality and sound budgetary management of the Specialised Centres
 - G. Activities (studies, projects, seminars, training, publications, etc..) carried out by the Specialised Centres or by some Governments (preferably in cooperation with Centres and providing additional resources) of member States of the Agreement.
2. The Bureau will oversee the implementation of the programme of activities, supported as necessary by the Chair of the Meeting of Directors of Specialised Centres and other experts the Chair may appoint. The Executive Secretariat will present proposals at the first meeting of the year of the Bureau. Such proposals

¹ i.e. existing working groups on education, ethics and resilience, cultural heritage and natural risk, vulnerability, etc..

² i.e. participation in the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction (EFDRR), the Partnership for Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction (PEDRR), cooperation with the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations, etc..)

³ i.e. EXTREMUM system of ECNTRM, Moscow, or alerts of CSEM, Paris

will be presented annually but will cover a two year cycle, starting in the period 2012-2013.

3. The Bureau and Executive Secretariat will use the following guidelines in the choice of activities proposed under G) above :
 1. The activity/project is in line with the priorities set in the Medium Term Plan and those set by the Committee of Permanent Correspondents for the biennial period concerned.
 2. The activity/project has clear, immediate application to increase the resilience of populations facing a risk or in the improvement of response in crisis situation and is line with specific needs of a state party to the Agreement.
 3. The activity/project has a true European and Mediterranean dimension and, for activities/projects of a fundamentally national character, their results may be used by other states, having an interest as pilot-cases.
 4. The activity/project is presented by two or more Specialised Centres or in collaboration with other Centres of recognised competence.
 5. Other partner Centre(s) or Government(s) involved bring additional resources and expertise to the activity/project.
 6. The activity/project has a transversal, multidisciplinary character, covering several risks or being developed in different states.
 7. The activity/project has clear deliverables with summaries of results in at least one of the two official languages of the Partial Agreement that may be publicised by the Partial Agreement and other appropriate sources.

8. The activity/project is scientifically or technically sound, innovative and far-reaching.
9. The activity/project is to be developed over two or more years.⁴
10. The activity/project contributes to further synergies among the Specialised Centres in the network of the Agreement.
11. The activity/project is aimed to analyse the “state of the art” in a sector of Disaster Risk Reduction aiming to providing new directions of research and action.
12. The activity/project integrates partners from the private sector which fund part of the activity/project.

The above criteria will be valued positively in assessing the activities/projects presented but their non fulfilment is not meant as an exclusion criteria.

⁴ This point is not meant to exclude Activities/ Projects that may be developed during one budgetary year

Appendix 3

Some issues of special concern of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents for 2012-2013 biennium

- Reduction of vulnerability (improving resilience, mapping risks, improving environment resilience and planning, adapting to climate change, etc...)
- Governance of risk (integrating the different aspects and actors of prevention and response, building national platforms, etc..)
- Awareness and improving preparedness of populations and rescuers to emergency situations, building a culture of risk
- Earthquakes and prevention. Identification of areas or buildings at risk, preparedness for events, etc...
- Cultural heritage and risk (protection of cultural goals, buildings, collections, world heritage, historical sites)