

# Ethical Principles on Disaster Risk Reduction and People's Resilience





# **Ethical Principles** on Disaster Risk Reduction and People's Resilience

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European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA)



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This document is the response of the Executive Secretariat of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's invitation to it, in Recommendation 1862 (2009), to prepare an ethical charter on resilience to disasters. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe endorsed this proposal in paragraph 8 of its reply of 8 July 2009, calling for a European and Mediterranean Ethics Charter on resilience to major disasters, whose aim would be to improve preparedness and deal with ethical problems concerning victims of disasters.

The 12th Ministerial Session of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement, held in St Petersburg on 28 September, confirmed the need to continue to work on ethical principles which contribute to disaster risk reduction, while improving societies' resilience and responding efficiently to emergencies.

This document concerns both natural and technological disasters. It should nevertheless be noted that most international documents relating to the links between human rights and disasters cover only natural disasters. However, we did not think that it was appropriate to confine ourselves to natural disasters, as **ethical principles should apply in all circumstances**. Moreover, the International Law Commission makes no distinction between the two types of disaster in its draft articles on the protection of persons in the event of disasters. Lastly, dealing with both types of disaster accords with the remit of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement. Including man-made disasters does mean, however, leaving out those resulting from armed conflicts.

The current document is intended to deal both with the direct victims of disasters and with the other parties involved, such as public civil defence organisations, public servants of states affected by disasters and of assisting states, and humanitarian NGOs. So many parties are involved that common ethical principles are required, transcending the rules governing the responsibilities of local and regional authorities, in accordance with the wishes expressed by the International Law Commission in the course of its work on the protection of persons in the event of disasters.

**These ethical principles therefore relate not just to direct local victims, but also to all parties involved in disaster response, at any time and in any place.** The document deals with the ethical principles of the whole disaster cycle: from prevention to reconstruction via the emergency phase, irrespective of the duration of the disaster (sudden or progressive) or its context (simple or complex emergency<sup>1</sup>). It is important to properly make a distinction between an emergency in the case of a disaster and preventive measures in the case of a risk of disaster. An emergency implies rapidity of intervention no matter the origin of the disaster. **Human rights cannot be ignored under the deceptive pretext of exceptional circumstances.** Prevention aims at risk reduction before a disaster and is adapted to various types of disaster. It implies the usual respect of human rights. The context of the two situations is radically different and so the ethical principles applicable require an assessment adapted to the circumstances. The ethical questioning varies according to the moment (before, during or after the disaster) and also according to the field under consideration (health, rescue operations, environment, governance).

The ethical principles mostly concern individuals, but in some cases may also apply to corporate bodies, although ethical concerns have a more natural link with personal law than institutional law.

*The aim of this document is to establish, for the whole process of dealing with disasters (from prevention measures to reconstruction, including the actual crisis period, so before, during and after disasters), what moral obligations the various parties have, local victims and rescuers alike, in the light of existing rules of general international law, and particularly those relating to international law of human rights.*

<sup>1</sup> A humanitarian crisis accompanied by near or complete collapse of the authorities



The numerous documents and declarations about disasters have very seldom addressed the links between disasters and human rights. Crisis situations and the emergencies to which they give rise have the effect of eclipsing existing rights in general, and human rights in particular. In some states, crisis situations are treated as “exceptional circumstances” or “force majeure”. This is used as legal justification for setting aside the usual legal rules. In principle, **fundamental human rights are to be applied at all times and in all places, because of their universal nature**<sup>2</sup>. They should therefore be enforced in all circumstances, including times of disaster. Crises and emergencies all too often mean that the overriding nature of human rights is forgotten and certain exceptions are tolerated. What we should be doing instead is pointing to the compelling ethical need to respect these rights, either to fill a legal vacuum or to bolster and strengthen the basic duties of the various parties involved in the disaster. **Disasters do not cause fundamental human rights to vanish.** They often mean that these rights are intentionally or unintentionally forgotten for a time, especially as the absence of, and the lack of effective supervision by, the police and judicial authorities make it easier for infringements of fundamental rights to go unpunished. In a disaster parties are also faced with choices of ethical nature.

<sup>2</sup> The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) ; The European Convention on the safeguard of human rights and fundamental freedoms (1950) ; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and economic, social and cultural rights (1966) ; Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) ; Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000) ; Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)

Local victims, humanitarian organisations and the other bodies and persons involved must therefore be reminded that certain human rights and duties must be especially respected and cannot be waived, even during exceptional circumstances. This reminder insists on raising awareness and training the public to confront the reality of disaster situations. **An emergency sometimes requires taking decisions which can be morally difficult.** One has to be prepared for this. This awareness raising and training of the public will ease its awareness of the ethical problems encountered in these circumstances and will thus enable the public to also contribute to the respect of human rights.

It is difficult, however, to select the ethical principles which should apply. On the face of it, it would appear obvious that all human rights are absolute, whether civil and political or economic, social and cultural. However, to avoid making an overlong list, we will concentrate only on those considered to be more frequently in jeopardy before, during and after a disaster, and refer for a fuller list to the various handbooks and operational guides on the links between human rights and disasters<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Sphere, project handbook and humanitarian charter, 2004; Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), Operational guidelines on human rights and natural disasters, 2006; IDLO, Manual on international law and standards applicable in natural disaster situations, by Erica Harper (co-ordinator), Rome, March 2009.



In the absence of an appropriate and coherent legal instrument setting out for the international and regional levels human rights and duties during the different phases of the disaster cycle, it is in keeping with the Council of Europe's objectives to propose, *de lege ferenda*, the ethical principles necessary and applicable to both public and non-public parties<sup>4</sup>. In this respect this document is original and innovative and could inspire other initiatives at international level.

The aim of ethical principles applied to disaster risk reduction is to strengthen the resilience of populations in the event of a likely natural and technological disaster, by giving an ethical content to the risk reduction measures, such as prevention, assistance, reduction of vulnerability and reconstruction, centred around sustainable development, the protection of human rights and the reduction of human vulnerability linked to gender, social and environmental.

These ethical principles should also help to better cope with problems arising during the disaster. In both cases, it should give rise to a culture of resilience associated with a systematic consideration of human rights, everywhere and at all times, thus contributing to the development of a "moral code" applicable just as well to disaster prevention as to emergency situations during the disaster itself.

It should be possible to monitor informally through the EUR-OPA Agreement any problems arising in the practical application of these ethical principles. The principles could also serve as a basis for the work of the International Law Commission and of the United Nations Human Rights Council, which have on several occasions highlighted the imperative need to take human rights into account in times of disaster<sup>5</sup>. In the context of the Haiti disaster, the press release of 2 February 2010 by a regional body, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, emphasised the threats to human rights resulting from the Haiti disaster. The Council of Europe's ideas may also be useful to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

<sup>4</sup> Following on from Recommendation 1823 (2008) on global warming and ecological disasters and Resolution 1655 (2009) on environmentally induced migration and displacement – a 21st century challenge of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

<sup>5</sup> Human Rights Council Resolution of 28 January 2010 on the support of the Human Rights Council to the recovery process in Haiti: a human rights approach (A/HRC/S-13/L.1).

This document has no legally binding force. It is simply a reminder of the fundamental principles usually applicable when disasters occur, both before and after a disaster. It may be a useful guide for the various persons concerned.

None of the measures relating to ethical principles can be interpreted to allow a restriction or an infringement of existing rights guaranteed by international, regional and national bodies for the protection of human rights and by humanitarian agreements already in force.

Ethical principles  
relating to disaster risk reduction  
and contributing  
to people's resilience to disasters



The Parties to the EUR-OPA Agreement can only note the increase in the risks of natural and technological disasters and their frequency. These disasters pose a major threat not only to the survival of populations and societies as a whole, but also to the dignity and safety of individuals and to the preservation of the natural, cultural and environmental heritage. Most of the time the disorganisation which disasters cause to society results in serious infringements of the entire range of human rights.

Various consequences affecting human life, safety, dignity, property, cultural heritage, the environment and sustainable development result from all those events.

Certainly, the vulnerability of individuals, communities and the environment is a major factor in exposure to disaster risks which limits resilience, but these risks do not affect everybody in the same way. Poor people and socially disadvantaged groups are the most exposed and suffer most directly from disasters. Yet the most fragile people are often not given priority in prevention strategies or operational manuals, despite quite clearly being the most vulnerable.

The increase in disaster risks, greater population density in exposed areas and population movements due to climate change have consequences for human rights, requiring disaster risk reduction to be incorporated into strategies for adaptation to climate change, in conjunction with respect for human rights.

*Through their impact on society, the economy and the environment, disasters jeopardise sustainable development. Environmental degradation compounds economic and social vulnerability by increasing all forms of inequality and by contributing to an increase in risks.*

As disasters, whether natural or technological, can aggravate population movements, and since there is no international legal status protecting environmentally displaced persons, who are in a situation of extreme vulnerability, **there seems to be a need to consolidate behaviour ethically in keeping with fundamental human rights.**

Considering the impact of disasters on human rights, in the absence of a specific universal binding legal instrument, it seems imperative to formulate the ethical principles essential as part of a minimum set of ethical standards for the various parties concerned, in prevention, action and reconstruction strategies.

Disaster victims are people directly affected in the flesh (dead and wounded), whether they be persons assisted or relief workers. Indirect victims are people having suffered an economic or social prejudice resulting from direct or indirect effects of the disaster.

**That increased resilience is dependent on reducing vulnerability** as a whole, whether it is linked to poverty, gender, health, insecurity, family break-up, fear or panic; that reduction requires ethically responsible practice.

The international community, local, regional and national authorities, international organisations, non-governmental organisations and companies have a duty to adopt prevention, assistance and reconstruction measures to protect individuals, natural, historical and cultural heritage, property and means of development and subsistence from disasters, while taking account at all times, in all places and without discrimination, of the need to protect the fundamental rights of those concerned.

The cross-border impact of disasters should not be forgotten, and requires preventive measures, a common, concerted response, co-operation between governments and local and regional authorities, and the involvement of civil society.

At all events, only better anticipation and improved prevention will be able to reduce the risk of deliberate or unintentional breaches of the human rights liable to affect both direct and indirect disaster victims.

If some public and private development projects may contribute to an increase in the risk of disaster, they must in consequence, with a view to sustainable development and respect for human rights, take the risks into account in their impact studies and limit their effects, particularly for vulnerable people, by including these effects in various disaster prevention measures and plans so as to strengthen disaster resilience.

Good governance in disaster management obliges an easier participation of the population in the planning and decision making processes regarding the reduction of risks linked to natural and technological eventualities concerning them. Good governance also forces people to account for their actions and hence reduces the risk of corruption in government, in civil services and in society.

Finally, it should be emphasised that the human rights of indigenous communities and local populations require special protection, taking account of their customs, cultures and differentiated relations with the environment, which make them more vulnerable to the risks of disaster, while emphasising the importance of their knowledge of the locality and its history to risk prevention and reconstruction.

*Such ethical principles should, in the event of a disaster, help to strengthen disaster resilience by ensuring that all those affected by the disaster, assisted persons and relief workers alike, are protected both physically and in terms of human dignity.*

*The most vulnerable groups need special protection of their rights taking into account their physical and psychological specificities in order to help them cope better with the disaster.*



## **Solidarity**

**Nations and peoples should co-operate in a spirit of solidarity so as to strengthen disaster resilience and help victims.** The costs and burdens of disasters, as well as the benefits of risk reduction measures, should be shared equitably, which implies giving particular attention to the most vulnerable individuals and communities.

## **Joint responsibility**

National and local public authorities, the private commercial sector, agricultural and industrial, non governmental organisations, individuals and the media have a joint responsibility regarding prevention in the face of disaster risk and regarding an efficient contribution in the face of emergency situations.

## **Non-discrimination**

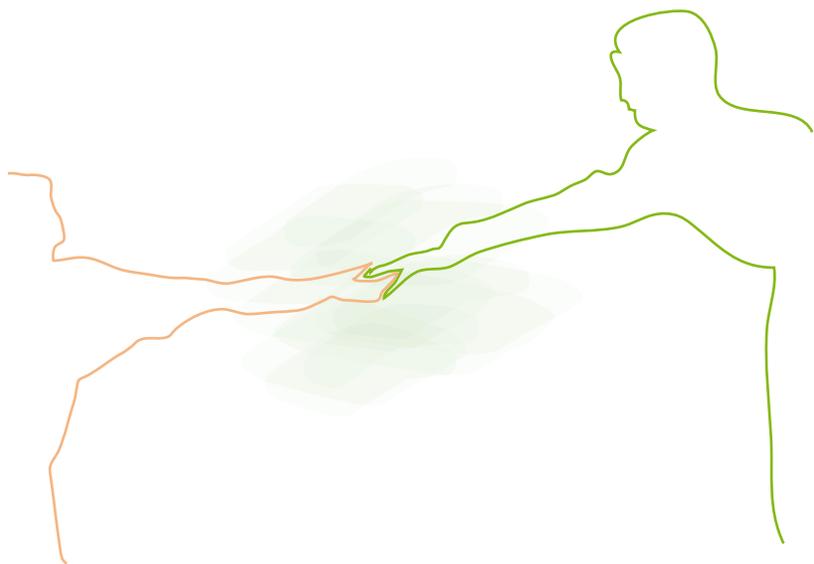
Measures to prevent, reduce and prepare for disasters and to distribute relief and promote recovery, and also the enjoyment of fundamental rights are secured and implemented without distinction on any ground such as gender, sexual orientation, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, ethnic group, affiliation to a national minority, socioeconomic circumstances, birth, disability, age or other status.

## **Humanity**

**All persons are treated humanely, in all circumstances, that is to say with respect, tolerance and compassion,** regardless of the nature, origin, duration and place of the disaster, and particular attention should be paid to the most vulnerable people. The dignity and rights of all disaster victims are respected and protected in all circumstances.

### Impartiality

Disaster prevention, preparedness, relief and recovery measures should be implemented and provided on the basis of genuine needs alone, without any favouritism between or within the population groups concerned.



### Neutrality

Disaster prevention, preparedness, relief, response and recovery measures should be taken without political, racial, religious or ideological debate, and with the sole aim of protecting individuals and the enjoyment of their rights, the environment, property and heritage, and thereby strengthening resilience to this type of event.

### Co-operation

**States should co-operate, regardless of political, economic, social and cultural differences and according to their capacities,** to strengthen disaster resilience and to secure respect for human rights, showing particular regard for the possible cross-border impact of disasters and the need for joint action.

### Territorial sovereignty

States have a duty to protect persons on their territory, guaranteeing that, even if a disaster occurs, human rights are fully applied for not only their nationals, but also for foreigners on their territory including humanitarian assistance teams from abroad.

### Prevention

States, as well as regional and local authorities, have a responsibility to implement anticipatory and preventive measures, with the most active involvement possible of all parties, including companies and the civil society. This principle presupposes awareness of the different risks in different places and at different times, depending particularly on variables arising from demography and climate change.

### Role of the media

**The media plays an essential role by informing and raising the public's awareness** to the forecasting of disasters and the way they evolve. Disaster victims are treated by the media with dignity and with full respect of their privacy.



# The ethical principles applied prior to disasters



## 1 Introduction of prevention measures

1. **All persons should benefit from disaster prevention measures** which ensure, by suitable means, their protection from bodily harm and the protection of their assets and which are also able to provide an appropriate level of disaster resilience, taking advantage of feedback from various countries about their experience of dealing with all possible types of disaster.

2. Such prevention measures are specially adapted to the various eventualities and the diverse categories of vulnerable people, so as to provide a better guarantee of the very strictest safety measures.

## 2 The importance of a good quality healthy environment

Given the services rendered by ecosystems, there is a direct link between quality of environment, including the protection of ecosystems, level of exposure to natural eventualities and communities' ability to react. Thus **the existence of a right to a healthy environment** enables to better protect at the same time the ecosystems and the neighbouring populations as well as their property which is consequently less vulnerable and more secure.

## 3 Education, training and awareness-raising about resilience to disasters

All persons, including children and people with disabilities, their families, those who care for them, teachers, civil servants and company directors and employees are entitled to receive **appropriate instruction and training** capable of strengthening their resilience to disasters and creating an outlook and a culture of prevention of, and adaptation to, risks.

#### 4 Prior information

1. **All persons may request, disseminate and receive reliable information, of both a technical and more accessible nature**, together with explanations where necessary (inter alia about alerts, and with advice about the right way to behave in the case of a disaster), about the risks to which they are exposed and the measures to adopt to limit or reduce the risks and to foresee or limit the effects of a disaster. Prevention measures and alerts vary with the type of disaster envisaged.

2. States, regional and local authorities, hospitals, schools and companies produce and provide high-quality information, according to procedures and in a language that are easy for everyone to understand, about disaster risks and the preventive measures to adopt in order to reduce these. This information includes risks linked to housing construction and public infrastructure. This information is supplied subject to the limits associated with the level of knowledge, the predictability of risks and the availability of such information.

#### 5 Participation

1. **All persons can be consulted on and are able to participate in the drawing up of disaster risk prevention and reduction plans and programmes** and emergency and relief plans, as well as in decisions on public or private projects which could, directly or indirectly, potentially cause or exacerbate disasters.

2. This participation takes place at both national and local levels. Its implementation implies the participation of all local bodies.

#### 6 Freedom of expression

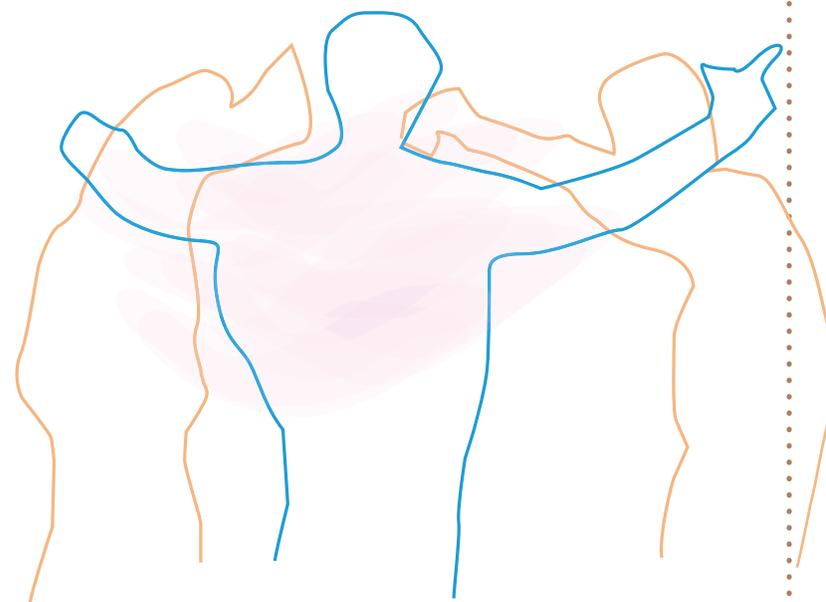
**All persons may express publicly their opinions**, fears and wishes and take part in the public debate on disaster risk prevention, on public authorities' and private bodies' predictions and on assistance and reconstruction measures planned in case of disaster.

#### 7 Access to justice

**All persons have the right to a fair trial** and an effective legal remedy to ensure the protection, respect and enjoyment of their rights with regard to the prevention measures planned or if the authorities fail to act to adopt prevention and disaster risk reduction measures and to organise relief.

#### 8 Disaster prevention at the workplace

**All workers are informed in due time about disaster risks** at their workplace and about the effects of natural and technological disasters. They receive special training in disaster prevention and possible responses to disasters.



### 9 Disaster prevention in recreation and tourist areas

**All individuals are informed about potential disaster risks during their leisure or tourism activities** and about the effects of natural eventualities and technological dangers. They can benefit from appropriate special information about prevention and the possible responses to disasters, enabling them to find out, in accessible language, about relief plans and how to behave if a disaster occurs.

### 10 Disaster prevention in public places, particularly schools and hospitals

Users of public places, particularly schools and hospitals, are informed about disaster risks which can be a threat to these buildings. This information should include special prevention measures and possible responses to disasters, and should explain, in accessible language, the main points of relief plans and how to behave in a disaster.

### 11 Special prevention measures for the most vulnerable groups

Pregnant women, children, disabled persons, elderly persons, the sick, the wounded, indigenous populations, environmentally displaced persons, ethnic and religious minorities and the most disadvantaged members of society, including persons or groups of persons who are victims of racism, benefit from disaster prevention measures tailored to their already existing vulnerability.

### 12 Organisation of and participation in emergency drills

**To strengthen disaster resilience, emergency drills and simulations as well as national and local information and alert campaigns are regularly organised**, with active participation by local authorities, relief agencies, companies, the populations concerned and people temporarily in the area. Special arrangements should be made for persons with disabilities, particularly for those with a hearing impairment if sirens are used.

### 12 Preventive evacuation of populations

1. Except in situations of serious and imminent danger, all the necessary steps are taken, insofar as is possible without compromising public safety, to avoid temporary evacuation and displacement of people because of the risk of a disaster.

2. **Compulsory evacuation before a disaster should not be allowed unless there is an imminent threat.** Persons who refuse to be evacuated do so at their own risk.

3. Persons, groups or communities evacuated because of serious risks and imminent threats of disaster are duly notified of the time of the evacuation, the procedures to be followed, the destinations and the expected duration of the evacuation. The arrangements for evacuation guarantee that their dignity and their fundamental rights are protected, and should include special protection for their property and effects.

4. Special operational procedures are planned and followed for the evacuation of vulnerable persons, particularly persons with disabilities.

# The ethical principles applied during disasters



## 1 Humanitarian assistance

**All persons receive immediate assistance in the event of a natural or technological disaster**, including the benefit of basic health services. Humanitarian assistance is provided fairly, impartially and without discrimination, showing due regard for the vulnerability of victims and for individuals' and groups' specific needs. This humanitarian assistance meets the needs of the populations concerned, in accordance with international standards and the best existing practices.

## 2 Information and participation during disasters

**All persons, local and regional authorities and non-governmental organisations affected by disasters are informed of and are entitled to participate in making decisions in response to disasters.** They receive, in their own language, easily understandable information about the nature and extent of the disaster, the emergency measures planned in response to it, the times and places at which food and drink will be distributed, the location of emergency medical facilities, temporary housing arrangements and the arrangements for and destination of any population movements that are planned.

## 3 Compulsory evacuation of populations

Compulsory evacuation can only take place if a clear explanation has been given of the potential risks involved in the case of non evacuation. Persons who refuse to be evacuated do so at their own risk and should not endanger the lives of rescue workers through their conduct.

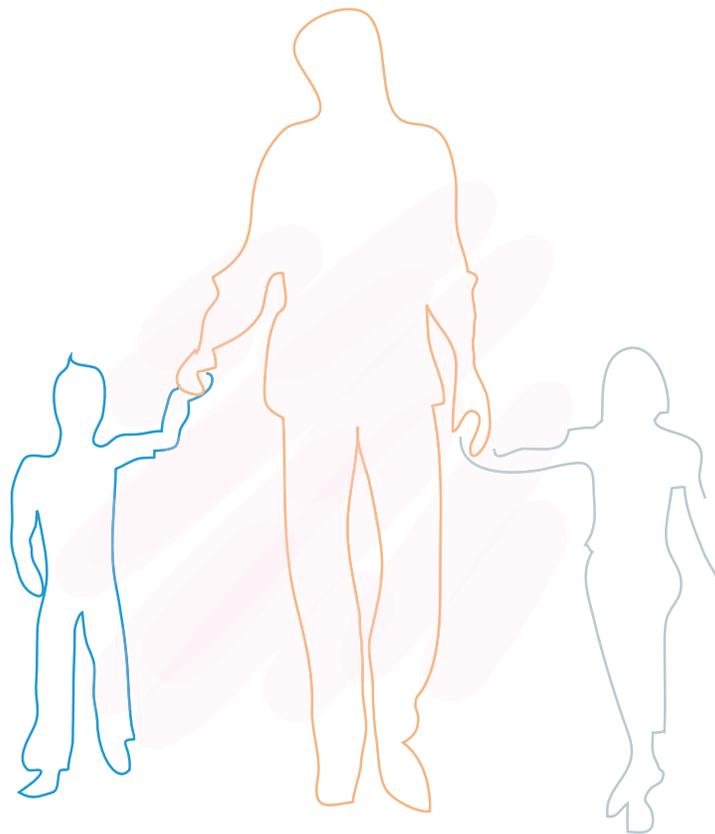
#### 4 Respect of dignity

1. **The dignity of all persons who are victims of a disaster is respected**, particularly concerning his/her security, physical safety, access to food and clean water, hygiene, temporary housing, clothing and if necessary essential emergency medical and psychological care.

2. Sexual violence and abuse is intolerable whoever the perpetrators and victims may be.

#### 5 Respect of persons

Personal rights are respected, particularly the right to one's own image and the right to privacy, so that the presence of the media does not result in abuses.



#### 6 Emergency assistance for the most vulnerable persons

Allowing for local circumstances and without prejudice to the priority assistance to be given to all who have a chance of survival, priority for humanitarian assistance, **first aid and any emergency evacuations go in priority to the most vulnerable people**, such as pregnant women, children, people with disabilities, elderly people, the ill and the wounded.

States train and provide special equipment to members of the emergency services and doctors and nurses, so that they are able to search for and provide first aid to the most fragile persons.

#### 7 The importance of rescue workers

1. **Assistance measures are implemented in a spirit of humanity, solidarity, hope and impartiality.**

2. Irrespective of their nationality, their status or their function and regardless of the seriousness and nature of the disaster, both civilian and military rescue workers, including any private security forces, behave with dignity, keep their anxiety or fear under control, keep calm and ensure that they never infringe the fundamental rights of the people they are rescuing.

3. **Rescue workers, in the face of the local populations, have a pre-eminent moral role as a model for the respect of human rights.**

4. Emergency relief should be provided without discrimination or favouritism and without heed to differences in gender, religion, language or social status.

5. Rescue workers do not take advantage of the exceptional situation to misuse their rights. They never exploit the weakness or helplessness of the persons assisted to force them to carry out acts that infringe their human dignity or their physical and sexual integrity. They refrain from any act that may be equated with corruption.

6. Rescue workers of any nationality continue to enjoy all their fundamental rights, even during emergency situations.

7. **Rescue workers have psychological assistance available during and after relief operations.**

8. States, international organisations and all institutions connected with humanitarian assistance in response to disasters take every possible measure to guarantee to rescue workers the necessary conditions for them to carry out their work properly, including the conditions needed to protect their dignity, safety, and physical and psychological integrity.

9. States, regional and local authorities and rescue training establishments provide special training to rescue workers covering human rights and ethical principles in times of disaster and the special arrangements for dealing with persons with disabilities and the most vulnerable persons.

#### **8 Measures to safeguard and rehabilitate the environment**

In view of the importance of the environment to human survival, practical measures are taken to ensure the quickest possible safeguarding and rehabilitation of environmental assets and the re-establishment of environmental quality.

#### **9 Necessary measures to safeguard and restore social ties**

Considering the importance of social ties to human survival, **practical measures are taken to ensure that social ties are restored as quickly as possible**, in particular by foreseeing meeting places, places of worship and places for leisure activities.



# The ethical principles applied after disasters



## 1 Strengthening resilience to the effects of disasters

1. As guardians of sustainable development, **states and local and regional authorities as well as companies contribute to strengthening resilience by getting sites back to normal as quickly as possible after a disaster.**

During the period of a return to the conditions of a normal life, they continue to guarantee infrastructures and essential services, the enjoyment of and respect for human rights.

2. The businesses, other economic players and humanitarian organisations involved in the reconstruction process are responsible for respecting the human rights and dignity of victims and of any persons taking part in the reconstruction work. They adopt measures and practices ensuring in all places and all circumstances that human rights are protected and respected in the course of their activities.

3. The urgency of the rehabilitation process cannot be used as an excuse for taking reconstruction or environmental rehabilitation measures that would ultimately be detrimental to the environment or to residents' future safety.

## 2 Necessary measures

1. **States should do what they can to adopt the requisite measures to ensure that human rights are protected and promoted** during all reconstruction and rehabilitation work, and to investigate infringements of those rights.

2. The organisations and authorities responsible for reconstruction work and the humanitarian assistance agencies participating therein, as well as all those bodies' staff, should respect human rights and adopt an irreproachable line of conduct in keeping with ethically responsible behaviour throughout their work, while endeavouring to achieve the highest level of protection.

### 3 Protection of economic, social and cultural rights

1. **Economic, social and cultural rights are protected and measures are taken to safeguard their implementation during the rehabilitation phase that follows disasters.** Efforts to secure respect for these rights should give priority to the right to medical and psychological assistance, education, protection of property and the cultural heritage, housing and means of subsistence, preservation of culture, traditions and customs and restoration of the quality of the environment.

2. Ceremonies for the dead are organised without delay, in accordance with the respective traditions and religions.

3. Temporary housing is used for the shortest possible time.

4. Restitution of property deeds is carried out on the basis of claimants' good faith, backed up by witnesses' statements, if the relevant evidence has been lost.

5. Environmentally displaced persons, whether nationals or foreigners, have a say on the location and conditions of their temporary housing.

6. **Measures are adopted to guarantee in particular the right to health,** thanks to the medical and psychological treatment necessary to the full physical and psychological recovery of victims after disasters have occurred.

### 4 Protection of civil and political rights

1. **Civil and political rights are preserved after a disaster.**

2. Disaster victims whose official papers and identity documents have been lost or have disappeared obtain replacements easily.

3. Disaster victims are free to come and go at the site of the disaster, provided that they do not hinder relief and rehabilitation operations.

4. **Disaster victims receive all the necessary assistance for the purposes of family reunification.**

5. Special care is provided for orphans, and searches are made for parents, relatives, neighbours, friends or adoptive parents capable of taking them in, with priority being given to family reunification.

6. Formalities relating to voting rights are possibly relaxed to enable disaster victims to exercise their civic rights immediately.

*All these ethical principles should be widely distributed to States, non-governmental organisations, companies and civil society so that ethical standards accompany in all circumstances persons facing disaster situations. These ethical principles could be considered a code of good conduct for all concerned by the disaster cycle.*



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

Resolution 2011 – 1 of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents on Ethical Principles relating to Disaster Risk Reduction and contributing to People's Resilience to Disasters,

adopted at the 60th Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents, Strasbourg, France, 15 April 2011.

### The Committee of Permanent Correspondents

- a) Taking into account its Resolution 2010 2 on ethical values and resilience to disasters which recognises the value of applying best ethical principles in disaster risk reduction, in improving the resilience of societies and in responding efficiently to emergencies;
- b) Considering the appended "Ethical Principles relating to Disaster Risk Reduction and contributing to People's Resilience to Disasters" prepared by Professor Michel Prieur as a compilation of existing ethical principles related to disaster risk reduction and as an evolutionary text without a normative character;

### RESOLVES to:

1. invite Member States of the Agreement and other Council of Europe States to take account as appropriate of the appended ethical principles;
2. update the document regularly.

EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement

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