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EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT (EUR-OPA)

Climate Change Impact on Water Related and Marine Risks

Murcia, Spain, (26-27 October 2009)

DRAFT CONCLUSIONS

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1 Ideas and proposals on climate change and Disaster Risk Reduction

Even if it is difficult to summarise all the rich contents of presentations and ideas explored at the workshop, a number of general ideas seemed to reach consensus. They are presented in the first part of this summary. Participants agreed that those ideas might be put in the form of action recommended to governments so that the exercise may be followed by some operative guidelines that may serve as a source of inspiration for government policy and action.

A. Climate change is an unprecedented phenomenon in the history of humankind that will force to rethink how we build our societies and needs to lead to a more sustainable use of resources (food, water, energy, space and other).

B. Climate change will make European and Mediterranean societies more vulnerable to a number of hazards, particularly those linked to extreme climate events, marine risks and other water-related hazards. A non exhaustive list include drought and shortages in food production, heat waves, increased wild fires, desertification and aridification of natural systems, environmental stress, floods and flush floods, landslides, storms, and coastal and marine risks.

C. The old solutions will not work and new and innovative solutions will have to be found to make European and Mediterranean societies more resilient to increased climate-related disasters. There will be need for an improved knowledge-based approach to disaster risk reduction, better tuning both the response mechanisms in emergencies, to make them more efficient, and to deploy renewed efforts and energy on an improved prevention.

D. Climate change is a powerful supplementary reason to further and deepen the disaster risk reduction agenda, paying particular attention to integrate climate change and disaster risk reduction concerns, thus improving governance and creating the appropriate partnerships with a varied range of stakeholders (authorities at all levels, industry, rescuers, scientist and technicians, volunteers, insurers, environmentalists, etc.) so that the issue of protecting lives, property, livelihoods and the environment becomes a common concern of the whole society.

E At the government scale, an integration and harmonisation of policies is essential to success. Economic and development policies need to consider disaster risk reduction, safety of populations and sustainability as the inspiring driving forces for change.

F. Governments have a particular responsibility and need to show leadership, promoting more education to risk, creating the fora for debate, proposal and innovation in promoting sustainability and disaster risk reduction, such as the national platforms for disaster risk reduction being built in many European countries.

G. The cost of inaction will be too high and it should not be consider a reasonable option for its likely cost in resources, lives, and potential conflict.

H. International cooperation, exchange of knowledge and experiences and solidarity will be key factors to control or limit the effects on people of climate change and the expected rise in risk. This refers not only to the international sphere –cooperation and solidarity among states- but also within societies, where particular attention needs to be paid to the most vulnerable populations. In the international context United Nations programmes and initiatives, in particular the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), have a special role to play so they need to be reinforced with a strong mandate and sufficient resources to further the world’s disaster reduction agenda. In the European and Mediterranean sphere, both the European Union, the Union for the Mediterranean and the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) will be key players.

I. In the international arena, success of climate change negotiations are key to avoid climate change effects becoming an unmanageable disaster with lasting negative consequences for the future of human societies, so all necessary efforts need to be deployed to avoid the worst of scenarios.

J. Even if climate negotiations succeed and global warming, changes in rainfall and rising in sea level are limited and somehow put under control, a moderate climate change will occur, so there will be need

to adapt to the new climate circumstances and their impact on the safety of European and Mediterranean societies. For those reasons, disaster risk reduction should be an important part of the climate change adaptation agenda.

K. Societies need to identify the areas and sectors where climate change may produce an increase in vulnerability and set up appropriate prevention policies and early warning and rapid response mechanisms.

Based on the reflexions above, the participants would like to submit a few recommendations for the attention of governments. European and Mediterranean government are recommended to:

1.1 Identify problems and vulnerabilities

1. Identify how climate change, in the context of global change, will affect the vulnerability of population, paying special attention to the following:
 - a. how climate change will affect specific hazards, such as floods, marine risks, wildland fires, drought, heat waves, melting of permafrost, landslides and storms;
 - b. identify populations at risk, specially the most vulnerable because of social inequality;
 - c. map the risks, paying attention to areas and regions that may become more vulnerable such as mountains, areas prone to flooding, arid and semi-arid areas, coastal areas and urban areas, as well as the Arctic and the Mediterranean Regions.
2. Evaluate the costs in lives, the economy and the environment of the increase in vulnerability of populations, assessing at the same time the cost of preventive adaptation action and improvement of response in emergencies, so that decisions on action may be supported on hard data and appropriate cost-benefit analysis.

1.2 Reinforce the disaster risk reduction agenda and integrate it with the climate change agenda

3. Reinforce at the national level the disaster risk reduction agenda, devoting more resources to improve the resilience of populations and ensuring that adaptation to climate change are integrated into development and act as a driving force for change and modernisation of societies, making sustainability and safety principles of good governance and progress.
4. Improve existing legal and technical tools for early warning, response and prevention of disasters to integrate the new threats brought by global warming, changes in rainfall patterns and rise of sea level; devise new tools specially in "aid to decision" tools in crisis situations and prevention tools, reinforce in this context the building of a culture of risk, integrating as appropriate change.
5. Improve governance of disaster risk reduction, involving all authorities, integrating science, industry and citizens into appropriate partnerships and encouraging all to act both for mitigation of climate change and contribute to the implementation of adaptation measures that may reduce vulnerability; take account, in that framework, of the important federating role of multi-stakeholder national platforms for disaster risk reduction.

1.3 Adopting a knowledge-based approach to prevention and response. The role of science and innovation

6. Recognise the role of knowledge, both science and traditional knowledge, in disaster risk reduction, using existing resources to encourage innovation and favouring exchange of knowledge and

good practices; integrate social sciences in to disaster risk reduction, as the human dimension is a key aspect of both preparedness and response.

1.4 The role of cooperation and solidarity

7. Reinforce international cooperation on disaster risk reduction at the global and the European and Mediterranean levels, making disaster risk reduction an important part of the climate change negotiations and supporting global and regional mechanisms of cooperation.