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EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT (EUR-OPA)

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 2010 - 1

**ON REDUCING VULNERABILITY IN THE
FACE OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

This draft Recommendation is submitted for possible adoption at the 12th Ministerial Session of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) to be held in Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation, 28 September 2010.

The Ministers,

- A. Noting that human induced climate change is likely to 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;
- B. Noting furthermore that environmental degradation linked to climate change is a threat to sustainable development of societies, as reduced availability of food and water and possible human migration may weaken the capacities of certain communities in Europe and the Mediterranean to cope with growing hazards and may impede an adequate response to disasters;
- C. Aware that climate change is a powerful supplementary reason to reinforce 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;
- D. Highlighting that governments have a particular responsibility and should 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 countries;
- E. Believing that an integration and harmonisation of policies is essential to success and that economic and development policies need to consider disaster risk reduction, safety of populations and sustainability as the inspiring driving forces for change, thus giving adaptation to climate change high priority;
- F. Noting that 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 and recognising the pioneering and important role of United Nations programmes and initiatives, in particular the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) and encouraging the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) to be a key player in that field;
- G. Aware that 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;

RECOMMEND that member States of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA):

I. 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. the way climate change will affect specific hazards, such as floods, marine risks, wild land fires, droughts, heat waves, melting of permafrost, landslides and storms on local and regional scale;
 - b. identification of populations at risk, specially the most vulnerable because of social inequalities;
 - c. risk mapping, paying attention to areas and regions that may become more vulnerable as a result of climate change, such as mountains, areas prone to flooding, coastal areas and urban areas, arid and semi-arid areas, as well as the Arctic and the Mediterranean Regions;
2. Evaluate the human, economic and environmental costs 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 reliable data and appropriate cost-benefit analysis;

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

3. Reinforce as appropriate at the national level the disaster risk reduction agenda, devoting adequate 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 or increased threats brought by global warming, changes in rainfall patterns and rise of sea level; devise new tools specially as "aid to decision" in crisis situations and prevention, reinforce in this context the building of a culture of risk, integrating as appropriate climate 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;

III. Adopt 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;

IV. Recognise 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.

INVITE the member States of the Council of Europe which are not parties to the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), to examine the above recommendations and to use them as a source of inspiration for their policy and practice.