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EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT (EUR-OPA)

DRAFT RESOLUTION 2010 - 2

ON ETHICAL VALUES AND RESILIENCE TO DISASTERS

This draft Resolution 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 the increase in the risks of natural and technological disasters and their frequency;
- B. Considering that disasters pose a major threat not only to the survival of populations and society as a whole, but also to the dignity of individuals;
- C. Noting that the disorder which disasters cause may result in serious infringements to human rights;
- D. Considering the various potential consequences for human life, safety, dignity, property, cultural heritage, the environment and sustainable development;
- E. Considering that, through their impact on the environment, disasters jeopardise sustainable development, while environmental degradation entails economic and social vulnerability by increasing all forms of inequality and contributing to increased risks;
- F. Convinced that the vulnerability of communities and the environment is a major factor in exposure to disaster risks, which limits the potential for resilience, but these risks do not affect everybody in the same way;
- G. Convinced that poor people and socially disadvantaged groups suffer most from disasters;
- H. Drawing attention to the increasing risks of disasters and population movements because of climate change, and their consequences for human rights, which requires disaster risk reduction to be incorporated in climate change impact management strategies;
- I. Taking due note of the Council of Europe objectives to protect human rights, fight discrimination, sustain the rule of law and find common solutions to the challenges facing modern societies;
- J. Considering the impact of disasters on human rights and the need to incorporate this aspect into prevention, relief and reconstruction strategies;
- K. Considering that such strategies, should help to strengthen resilience to disasters by ensuring that everyone, both among the victims and among the relief workers, is protected both physically and in terms of human dignity;
- L. Considering that increased resilience is dependent on reducing vulnerability as a whole, whether it is linked to poverty, gender, health, insecurity, family breakups, fear or panic, and that ethically responsible practices are required to achieve this;
- M. Considering that the international community and regional and national authorities have a duty to adopt prevention, assistance and reconstruction measures to protect individuals, natural, historical and cultural heritage, property and means of development and survival from the risks of a disaster, while taking account, at all times, in all places and without discrimination, of the need to protect the fundamental human rights of those concerned;
- N. Considering that the cross-border impact of disasters requires preventive measures, a common, concerted response, co-operation between governments, communities and regional authorities and the involvement of civil society;
- O. Considering that some public and private development projects may increase the risk of disaster and that they must therefore include a sustainable development and human rights component, assessing through impact studies what risks may affect human rights in the event of a disaster, focusing in particular on vulnerable people, and taking account of these effects in various disaster prevention measures and plans designed to strengthen resilience to disasters;

- P. Taking note of the wish of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in their reply of 8 July 2009 to Recommendation 1862 (2009) of the Parliamentary Assembly that the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement works on ethics and disasters;
- Q. Sharing the principles and provisions of the international humanitarian law, international human rights law, refugee law and taking note of the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response and of the Code of Conduct for International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief;

RESOLVE to:

1. recognise the value of applying best ethical principles in disaster risk reduction, in improving the resilience of societies and in responding efficiently to emergencies.