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EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT
(EUR-OPA)

59th MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT CORRESPONDENTS

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**FROM MARRAKECH TO SAINT PETERSBOURG :
FOUR YEARS OF ACTION OF THE
EUR-OPA MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT**

2007-2010

SETTING UP A NEW ROADMAP : THE 2007-2011 MEDIUM TERM PLAN

As the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement of the Council of Europe was preparing to celebrate in March 2007 its 20th anniversary, the 2006 Ministerial Session served as a cornerstone to not only evaluate the important work carried out up till then but also, based on the strengths and weaknesses identified along the years, to define the new trends to be observed by the Agreement in the following four years.

A new context : a global approach to Disaster Risk Reduction

The Marrakech Session took place after a series of exceptional disasters, amongst which the devastating Tsunami in South East Asia. This massive catastrophe in fact led to an unprecedented international commitment in the field of Disaster Risk Reduction: the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, supported by 168 countries including all the member States of the Agreement.

Consequently the Agreement decided to structure its future action along those common guidelines but to keep in mind the specificities of its own organization and of the geographical area it covers. If one of the goals of the Hyogo Framework of Action, namely the interaction between technicians and decision makers, was precisely one of the main assets of the Agreement, the limited severity (compared to other regions of the world) of the diverse hazards faced by the European and Mediterranean area, remains a challenge to implement common policies.

More focus on prevention issues

With respect to previous Medium Term Plans, the priorities set out in the Medium Term Plan 2007-2011 adopted at the 2006 Ministerial Session, implied placing greater emphasis on prevention issues with respect to operational ones. The reason was both due to means available and to international coordination: the increasing integration of civil protections within EU mechanisms and its openness to non-member States, covers to a great extent the needs in the operational field.

However, the importance of prevention issues had to some extent been minimized due to their non compulsory character and the fact that there still remains a potential way to reduce losses **if** a disaster occurs rather than a definite way to reduce them when it actually happens. The accuracy of such a strategic choice has been backed up by its increasing role in risk management : the EU policy itself has clearly advocated in 2009 an increased effort on prevention alongside the more traditional post-event intervention efforts.

A QUICK OVERVIEW OF SOME ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE MARRAKECH

Given the diversity of the activities developed over those last four years, such an overview can obviously only be partial. The following presentation on the main topics of the Medium Term Plan 2007-2011 tries to illustrate the commitment of the Agreement to convert the priorities for action into concrete achievements:

POLICY, LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS

Policy

The reinforcement of the role of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents has progressed as testifies the fact that between the two Ministerial Sessions, five recommendations have been adopted by the Committee¹: on coastal risks (2007), on psychological support to victims (2007), on radiological information for populations (2008), on cultural heritage and climate change (2009) and on national platforms (2009). It must also be highlighted that the accession of Serbia in 2009 has increased the number of member States to 26 and an increased effort to promote new accessions has been deployed. A progressive revision of the rules

¹ See appendix

governing the structures of the Agreement has also been engaged, in particular through the new 2007 Operating rules of the Specialised Centres. The new figure of Chair of the meeting of Directors of Centres representing the Directors at the Committee meetings and the invitation of the Committee Board to the annual Meeting of Directors of Centres intends to reinforce the necessary synergy between the two entities of the Agreement.

Legislative aspects

One of the recommendations adopted at the 2006 Ministerial Session emphasized the crucial role of local and regional authorities in risk management. A vital point to ensure efficiency of actions throughout the whole risk cycle is therefore an adequate articulation of the diverse means and decisions between all decision levels. In order to have a more concrete insight into the implications of existing rules at these different decision levels, a specific thematic group to further develop the study of this topic was set up in 2008. Its main goal was not the possible harmonisation between national legislations but rather to promote ideas through the identification of best practices: collecting relevant data and then checking which are the ideas to promote is consistent with such a “soft law” approach.

The Florival Centre, which acts as coordinator of the thematic group, received in the first phase of the study contributions from 8 countries, with the participation from Centres (Belgium, Algeria, and Armenia), academics (France) as well as representatives from governments (Greece, Luxembourg, Croatia and Cyprus). After a first meeting held in December 2008 to discuss more precisely the emergency response phase, a second meeting in June 2009 examined the national reports in more detail to identify good practices. This initial phase was concluded by a first report which highlights the importance of a smooth cooperation between the various levels at all stages of risk management and consequently the need to avoid information gaps between them: several proposals based on good practice were identified. An electronic version of the data collected is available to allow information update through internet and an easier contribution by other countries : this second phase with additional countries has already been launched to improve the present conclusions.

Apart from this general work, two international workshops were organised to discuss respectively new governance of radiological risks (Kiev, September 2008) and new governance of natural risks (Istanbul, October 2008). The Kiev workshop proposed to create an international network (involving in particular local authorities) to fill gaps in prevention and intervention in case of accident. A follow-up meeting in 2009 suggested to join forces with existing mayor associations (such as GMF and KSO) to benefit from their experience. Additional contacts with technical partners have been taken in 2010 to prepare a training course for local actors in 2011.

The twin workshops organized in Istanbul on new governance of natural disasters addressed important issues such as risk identification, learning from past disasters and cooperation fostering. It led to the main conclusion that stakeholders at all levels (local, regional, national and international) must be coordinated in order to better cope with future natural disaster challenges, in particular in view of the potential force of those related to climate change.

Institutional aspects

In order to take into account the wider spread of competencies among multiple stakeholders and in line with the Medium Term Plan commitment to encourage cooperation between response and prevention, the Agreement supported the creation and networking of National Platforms as a way to better coordinate their actions and maintain efficiencies. After co-organising with UNISDR Europe two European meetings of National Platforms and Focal Points in 2007 and 2008, the Agreement supported the organisation of the Bonn and London meetings in 2009 which led to the creation of the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction, whose first meeting will take place in Goteborg in October 2010. The Agreement has also proposed to the interested member States its support to set up such National Platforms.

BUILDING A CULTURE OF RISK REDUCTION

Education

Another recommendation adopted at the 2006 Ministerial Session was related to school education and emphasized its role in the awareness of the population to risks through children. An international workshop organised in Paphos (Cyprus) in 2007 tried to identify which more concrete actions could contribute to achieving these goals. The debates were organised around three main issues: the assessment of schools' safety, the promotion of a risk/safety culture among pupils and the possible use of new tools for risk education. In a nutshell, if the safety issues are progressively taken into account, risk awareness remains a challenge due to the absence of risk training in curricula and the difficulty to impose such training.

Following the conclusions of this workshop, efforts over the period 2007-2010 in this domain were focused on the development of the BeSafeNet initiative, which precisely wishes to promote risk awareness through a major new educational tool, Internet. The main goal of the initiative is, through the setting up of a collaborative website, to provide to interested teachers reliable information in multiple languages to develop their own teaching material as well as to serve as a forum for exchange of such experiences. Furthermore, such information on all potential risks can also be helpful for the more general population, especially in a context where the mobility of people increases the importance for such a release of global information.

The Strasbourg Centre worked in 2008 on the pilot project on landslides which led to a definition of the standard structure for the other risks, pointing out the difficulties encountered to adapt university level material to school level. To develop this initiative, a thematic group (with the Nicosia Centre acting as coordinator) was set up to collect and rework the required material. This material was provided by several Centres according to their own speciality and consequently required substantial editing: its final version will be available in 2011 in at least three languages (English, French and Greek). The BeSafeNet undertaking is particularly interesting as the experiences of all Centres are used in a joint project, paving the way for similar efforts in other fields.

Additional action in school education has been promoted by the Centres at more national scale: the Biskra Centre has continued its educational programme on raising awareness amongst pupils of desertification and the Ankara Centre organised a workshop in Antalya in 2009 focused upon the importance of the local level of training on risks. In 2007 and 2008 the Valletta Centre also published a book in several languages on the Mediterranean coastal environment and risks addressed to 6-11 year old pupils. Finally, school safety aspects not yet included into the BeSafeNet initiative have been studied in recent years by the Yerevan centre by means of questionnaires addressed to all educational actors in selected schools.

Training

This four years period has also seen a major reflection on the way the Agreement should develop its activities in the field of university-level training. A thematic group on higher/vocational education concluded that a full year programme is for the moment outside the scope of the Agreement and emphasized the need for courses which can be validated in already existing university frameworks. Such an approach could take advantage of the Bologna Process, which is progressively applied in most European countries and which allows such training courses to be validated by students as a full component of a diploma. The organisation of short-term specialised courses at master-level has thus been favoured during this period.

In 2009 and 2010, three new master-level trainings were organised :

- a training in the field of cultural heritage and climate change impact, coordinated by the Ravello Centre - the first one in Strasbourg was addressed to scientific students and the second one in Ravello focused more on humanistic students;
- a course on "Climate Change: impact on health, human environment and water" coordinated by the Strasbourg University and the ENGEES and addressed to scientific students;
- a coastal risks' training, coordinated by the Biarritz Centre, oriented in particular to coastal managers who often face a lack of information in their day-to-day activity.

The Strasbourg Centre also organised every two years an international summer course on the multi-risk approach (Bonn, 2006) and on quantitative risk assessment (Barcelona, 2008).

Among the other many actions developed in this field, we must recall the annual training course on

radiological monitoring in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone organised by the Kiev Centre as well as the San Marino Centre's annual cycle of training on disaster medicine and psychology. The latter also organised in 2010 a course on disaster and emergency medicine with the Nikiforov Medical Centre (St Petersburg). The Valletta Centre developed a post graduate module on coastal hazards and risk aspects in 2009 within a master degree on environmental planning at the University of Malta. More professionally oriented trainings were also organised locally: the Bucharest Centre trained officials to earthquakes and floods, the Yerevan Centre set up a training for trainers on first aid and the Baku Centre had a training programme for nurses to address doctors' shortage during disasters.

Information and awareness

Apart from the necessary awareness raising of future generations at school and at university levels, the Medium Term Plan 2007-2011 emphasized the need to reach the population as a whole in particular through better information provided on the sources and consequences of hazards. In order to facilitate the diffusion of such information both within the Agreement and towards the general public, the website of the Agreement has been reoriented to focus on the day-by-day activities developed by the Centres and the Secretariat as well as to disseminate the material these activities have produced.

Concerning more direct awareness raising actions, the Yerevan Centre has been developing since 2007 a project on the establishment of national and municipal campaigns on population awareness in Armenia. After defining a general methodology, it continued its work in 2008 with the preparation of necessary general material and devoted 2009 to producing more specific material with a particular emphasis in 2010 on the most vulnerable people. In all these phases, the provision of adequate information to the population at each stage to deal with the underlying risk or even the disaster is a major requirement.

The role of media in such awareness raising was also explored. Specific work on information related to the Danube flooding risk was initiated in 2008 by the Sofia Centre through its collaboration with the Bulgarian National Radio. The setting up in 2009 of a dedicated website DRACE where all pertinent materials will be posted could be an important basis for developing this project into a truly international project for the Danubian countries. The San Marino Centre also launched cooperation with local media to communicate in weather forecasts some information on pathologies related to climate change.

RESEARCH, RISK ASSESSMENT, EARLY WARNING AND REDUCTION OF UNDERLYING RISK FACTORS

The Agreement continued to support the activities on these issues through the network of Centres which has proved to be effective at least at national level. Nevertheless, the goals announced in the Medium Term Plan turned out to be quite optimistic when a truly multinational approach is adopted: a problem of standardization of data emerges for any transnational work as each country has its own methodology. As a consequence, the activities promoted by the Agreement in this field focused more on methodological issues than on the production of actual risk maps and early warning systems.

Risk mapping and vulnerability

Along this line of action, the Strasbourg Centre has been conducting since 2008 a study on the different methodologies used in mapping landslides and their possible harmonisation, preparing in 2009 an early warning cartography on landslides generated by climatic factors to identify more threatened areas and developing and testing an adapted model in 2010 based on landslide susceptibility mapping at European scale. The Moscow Centre's work on remote control of structures and buildings, already experimented on several public sites in Russia and whose methodology will be adopted at national level, also reflects the need for technical works more oriented to their actual implementation.

A quite ambitious undertaking on hazard mapping over the South Caucasus region was coordinated by the Tbilisi Centre, which continued its work on potential risks of large dams. Following an international workshop organised in 2006 with scientists and decision makers from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, their contributions led to the publication of an Atlas of GIS-based maps of natural hazards for the region in 2007, paving the way to similar initiatives in other regions.

To further encourage cooperation on vulnerability, a meeting of a new thematic group in 2009 explored possible approaches and suggested a pilot project on earthquake hazard: a monograph on the state of knowledge of the seismic risk vulnerability, benefiting from the wide experience in terms of seismicity of the network of Centres, appears to be a good starting point.

Early warning

Regarding early warning, a working group on this subject met before the 2006 Ministerial Session and concluded that the main problem is the lack of communication between scientists and decision makers due to the diverse way of handling the problem. This conclusion consequently led the Agreement to favour projects not directly related to early warning systems, which once again requires important resources, but rather to try to reduce the gap between scientific knowledge and action by encouraging studies more focused on this potential usage by decision makers.

PREPAREDNESS AND EFFECTIVE RESPONSE

Cooperation in emergency situations

In line with the request of the Medium Term Plan, the Agreement has focused over the past four years on the provision of useful information for emergencies. In particular, the support to two major initiatives concerning data dissemination has been continued: the European Warning System (operated by the Bruyères-le-Châtel Centre), which provides real-time alerts on earthquakes higher than 6 on the Richter scale within the Euro- Mediterranean area, and the Extremum project (operated by the Moscow Centre), which completes it with an early estimation of the possible consequences of the reported earthquake.

Indeed for the recent Al Hoceima, L'Aquila and Haiti earthquakes, Extremum proved quite accurate in defining the scale of the disaster and thus appears as a useful tool in emergency situations. To further refine the accuracy of such predictions, the Moscow Centre tried recently to improve the validity of the system by refining the very local data used through evaluation of vulnerability of remaining buildings and through updating data on populations: contributions by all member States to update relevant data can foster its usefulness.

Psychological aid

Regarding psychosocial assistance to victims, the cooperation with the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA) allowed to benefit from the expertise of their task force on the topic. A first concrete project was the definition of the structure of a training course addressed to psychologists, which materialized in a first training course for psychologists organised in 2010. A document on lessons learned in various past disasters was also published in 2010 while the Secretariat has set up in its website a psychological assistance e-library with material from various countries.

In parallel to this new approach of victims, activities around the more traditional medical emergency viewpoint were organised in various countries. Apart from its annual courses already mentioned, the San Marino Centre organized in 2009 a conference on similarities between the Abruzzi and Kamchatka earthquakes from the disaster medicine point of view. The Baku Centre also organized in 2009 a round table on disaster medicine and psychological aid and published a book of the proceedings in English. Finally, the Yerevan Centre continued its training efforts at national level in the domain of first aid.

OTHER EMERGING TOPICS

If the 2007-2011 Medium Term Plan took into consideration most of the important issues during that period, defining guidelines over such a long period leads inevitably to an underestimation of the importance of some topics which have progressively emerged as being crucial. While keeping to the major topics identified in the initial plan, the Agreement has consequently needed to adapt its year-by-year operation to include new

emerging challenges, such as the climate change impact on all hazards, or the resurgence of some hazards, such as forest fires or earthquakes.

Climate change

It has to be recognised that such a crucial topic was somewhat ignored in the 2007-2011 Medium Term Plan formulation but that relative ignorance needs be considered in retrospect : the actual and forecasted effects of climate change on our societies, and in particular disasters with natural phenomena as their source, has greatly improved during the last 5 years. From a mainly mitigation approach, scientists and decision makers have moved to a more pragmatic adaptation approach which can better handle its potential impact on natural hazards. Already in 2008, the Secretariat stressed the importance of this aspect on the prevention of risks in the future, highlighting the need to launch innovative ideas with regard to adaptation to climate change.

Due to its geographical situation and its field of speciality, the Biskra Centre can be considered within the network of Centres as a forerunner in the study of climate change impact on natural hazards. Its work, mainly on water management (both in quantitative and qualitative terms) and the associated risks of desertification and flooding, has for a few years been addressing the climate change impact on arid and semi-arid regions. Apart from the purely technical work, a climatic monitoring of desertification and increased sanding risk will take place in close cooperation with local and regional authorities and population awareness to such phenomena is promoted through a workshop

Apart from the above, other Centres have so far incorporated little work on this climate change aspect into their studies as it is too often considered to affect only meteorological hazards. Nevertheless, the sea level rise associated to climate change has already led the Strasbourg Centre to launch a study on the topic. Furthermore, the international workshop organised in Murcia in 2009, devoted to climate change impact on water-related and coastal risks, highlighted the increasing role of such topics: both droughts and severe floods may begin affecting regions which up till now have been preserved and the concentration of human activity in coastal areas will be challenged by the rise in sea-level.

Forest Fires

The catastrophic forest fires during this four year period in Portugal, Greece and more recently in the Russian Federation have stressed the importance of dealing with this hazard, and in particular where their prevention is concerned. With the inclusion in the network of the Freiburg Centre specialised in forest fires and the previous expertise of the Athens Centre, the activities on this specific hazard have increased and attempt to focus on more innovative approaches to the topic.

In this respect, a joint study by both Centres on the impact of forest fire smoke emphasized in 2007 the toxicity for both the population and the rescuers. Similarly, the consequences of fires on land contaminated by mines or by radiology, identified as an important problem at a first meeting in 2008, were further discussed in 2009 during a conference in Kiev, where the issue of transboundary cooperation appeared as essential. The role of climate change in forest fire phenomena was also addressed at an international meeting organised in June 2010 in Freiburg, Germany.

With the Freiburg Centre acting as leader, an extensive effort on management of forest fires in the Balkan countries was developed, firstly through training carried out in 2008 for forest owners and secondly by the publication of a guide for their intention. The participation of the Agreement to the establishment in 2010 of a regional monitoring centre for the Balkans in Skopje aims to provide an important tool for sharing information in that region and to fostering regional cooperation in the field.

Seismic risk

Being one of the origins of the Agreement, the recent L'Aquila earthquake emphasized the need to promote seismic related activities in order to be better prepared to deal with such disasters. If supported projects addressed mainly fundamental research, the collaboration of some Centres with their national authorities on earthquake risk and infrastructures must be highlighted as an example of greater synergy between scientists

and decision makers. The Rabat Centre developed joint work with authorities on seismic feasibility studies for new cities and existing large dams and public buildings' vulnerability to earthquakes.

Similarly, the Bucharest Centre supported in 2009 the enforcement by the Romanian Government of seismic rehabilitation programmes of existing buildings according to a new national Code taking into account EU codes and standards. The involvement of citizens in earthquake monitoring can also be pointed out: the Bruyères-le-Châtel Centre continued to develop this innovative initiative through on-line questionnaires filled in by web users and will try to use new social networks (such as Twitter or Facebook) to collect more information on earthquakes.

Due to the various Centres specialising in earthquakes, many other activities related to seismicity also took place. The Walferdange Centre developed several research studies in the earthquake field and continued its annual workshop on seismology and geodynamics. The Lisbon Centre organized in 2009 a seminar on earthquake forecasting, the conclusions of which will be published in the review "Natural Hazards". Finally, the Rabat Centre organised in 2010 a seminar celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Agadir earthquake and has a project for a web page with seismic information also transmitted via SMS to competent authorities.

LEARNING FOR THE FUTURE ...

As stated earlier, the numerous activities developed by the 27 Centres and the Secretariat of the Agreement over four years cannot all be reflected in detail in the present document.. Nevertheless, it has attempted to focus on those activities which better served the main priorities of action identified in the Medium Term Plan 2007-2011. Taking into account the limited means available with respect to the large range of action proposed, the actual achievements are encouraging as the promotion of projects involving several Centres, even if quite time consuming, has produced concrete results (such as the legislative study or the BeSafeNet website) and appear to be a way of reinforcing international co-operation within the Agreement.

However, there are obviously some topics which already appeared in 2006 as priorities but which could not be developed as fully as required during that four year period. In addition, there are still topics to be privileged in the future by the Agreement: if the disaster itself is perceived as a threat, more general risk awareness of the population remains a challenge and the necessary prevention measures and preparation plans suffer too often from that lack of perception of their usefulness. Departing from the purely technical approach, which nevertheless needs to be continued, future work of the Agreement should also deal with the human dimension in all risk phases, placing it as one of its major domains of action in the coming years.

APPENDIX**Recommendations adopted by the Committee of Permanent Correspondants**

RECOMMENDATION ON RISKS IN COASTAL AREAS

The Committee of Permanent Correspondents

- A. points out that most of the world's inhabitants live in coastal areas and that many human activities in Europe and the Mediterranean area are to some extent influenced by the proximity of the seas and oceans;
- B. recognises the prominent social and economic role played by coastal areas in interaction between land and sea, particularly in the case of estuaries, deltas and lagoons, which have their own special features;
- C. emphasises the extreme vulnerability of coastal areas, linked to the large number of stresses to which they may be subjected, from the sea or the land and on a regular or occasional basis;
- D. expresses its concern at the possible increase in coastal risks caused by climate change;
- E. notes that, through the natural intermediaries of rivers, coastal areas ultimately suffer the effects of any disruptive action on land, whether of natural or human origin;
- F. recognises the importance of geophysical changes, particularly those linked to the dynamics of the underlying structure of the earth's crust, which can cause huge disasters in these particularly vulnerable areas;
- G. states, with regard to the assessment of the scale of coastal risks, that the time factor has to be taken into account in the emergence of certain damages, although it may be impossible to determine their exact cause or at what point they will be triggered;
- H. notes the serious risk of accident in coastal areas due to marine pollution and in particular where the transport of oil and chemical products is concerned;
- I. regrets the impact of certain human installations whose immediate consequence has been to destabilise still further areas that are already unstable or even to destroy them, frequently forever;
- J. expresses its concern at the limited know-how of those in charge of managing coastal areas regarding their natural development, which may be disrupted by human activity;
- K. emphasises the clear lack of co-ordination, despite all the efforts that have been made, between often hastily-devised protective measures and the practical know-how made available to all those involved;
- L. notes the limited effectiveness of many of the measures taken by local or regional authorities to offset certain natural processes such as coastal erosion or accretion;
- M. notes the interest shown by the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement in coastal risks in recent years and the desire expressed at the 11th Ministerial Session of the Agreement to include measures to reduce the vulnerability of areas exposed to these risks in its Medium-Term Plan 2007-2011.

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

1. ensure, in so far as possible, that integrated management of coastal areas and the associated risks is co-ordinated at regional level, according to the natural features of the areas concerned and regardless of local or national administrative boundaries;
2. encourage local and regional authorities to devise adequate joint policy instruments to take increasingly fuller account of the risks facing coastal areas in terms of their natural development, which is impeded to differing degrees by the excesses of human activities. In this context, it is of major importance that natural and technological risks be taken into account in town and spatial planning policies in order to avoid or limit building in vulnerable areas;
3. carry out simulations designed to gauge the possibility of disruptions in coastal areas caused by unwanted inflows following the flooding of drainage basins, whether natural in origin or the result of problems triggered by damage to engineering structures; to also carry out simulations designed to gauge the possibility of accidental marine pollution;
4. study the requisite conditions for the establishment of warning networks for tsunamis, linked more or less directly to mechanical stresses on the earth's crust and occurring in coastal areas;

5. promote the development, in Europe and the Mediterranean area, of new scientific and technical co-operation networks intended to foster a multidisciplinary approach to interventions, co-ordinated methods for the analysis and interpretation of phenomena and intercalibration of results;
6. make the necessary arrangements for existing information to be collected with a view to setting up networked databases making for increased exchange;
7. encourage a policy of reviewing know-how at given times in the coastal protection decision-making process so as to eliminate duplication or superfluous items from activity programmes and be able to make the best use of past experience;
8. establish models for the evaluation of marine and coastal risks in the light of climate change;
9. promote the establishment of a higher education course on coastal risks, intended to train future managers of coastal areas on problems associated with the vulnerability of these areas which will form part of planned or existing Masters programmes on risks;
10. take account of the differences between the disruptive events likely to affect the coastal areas of northern Europe or the Atlantic coasts and those on the eastern and western shores of the Mediterranean, which are subject to highly active plate tectonics;
11. bear in mind the highly variable nature of the temporal and spatial processes affecting coastal areas so as to take account of the differences in the development of those on the mainland and those on islands and archipelagos;
12. regard, in the light of previous successful operations, coastal risks as a potential vehicle for international co-operation as coastal processes often have disastrous consequences for countries' economies and inhabitants.

Furthermore, bearing in mind both the diversity of European coasts and their hinterlands and also the distinctive features of the seas and oceans on whose shores they lie, the Committee of Permanent Correspondents recommends that in future the Agreement should:

- plan to set up research, training and development activities having as focal points:
 - the Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Insular Coastal Dynamics, Valletta-Gozo (Malta), which specialises in coastal problems and risks in the Mediterranean;
 - the Biarritz Oceanography Centre (France), which specialises in the study of coastal risks and their consequences on Europe's Atlantic coast and could be included in due course in the Agreement's Network of Specialised Centres.

***RECOMMENDATION ON PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT AND SERVICES
FOR VICTIMS OF DISASTERS***

The Committee of Permanent Correspondents:

- A. recognising that adequate psychosocial intervention following disasters can reduce ill health and foster resilience if handled appropriately;
- B. noting that its Medium Term Plan 2007-2011 encourages the Agreement to promote, in co-operation with professional associations, the establishment of networks of specialists with the capacity to act in emergency situations or to train local psychologists in dealing with disaster victims, in particular children and other vulnerable groups;
- C. conscious that it is desirable that each member State of the Agreement incorporates psychosocial support in its provisions for emergency planning, promoting proper training of volunteers and professionals and setting standards as to the minimum level of care to be received by victims of disasters;
- D. thanking the Standing Committee on Disaster Crisis and Trauma Psychology of the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA) for their ideas and their wish to collaborate with the Agreement in promoting an improved psychosocial attention to victims of disasters;

RECOMMENDS that governments of Member States:

- 1. ensure that, following disasters, survivors, bereaved and rescue personnel have appropriate access to psychosocial help and services free of charge;
- 2. integrate as appropriate, psychosocial support into national laws and regulations and ensure that such support be part of emergency plans;
- 3. ensure that psychosocial support and services include the following elements:
 - i. psychological first aid is available for all survivors and bereaved immediately after disaster. Adequate information systems that secure early identification of those involved, embedded in a caring environment, reduce the mental strain of individuals and families, and should be prioritized in the early help efforts;
 - ii. out-reach early interventions are actively offered to bereaved families and survivors;
 - iii. screening is undertaken (1-3 months after the disaster) to ensure that effective treatment is available for people at risk;
 - iv. culturally sensitive long term follow-up is offered to individuals, families and communities that experience significant mental distress over time as a result of the disaster;
 - v. special efforts are taken to ensure that children get appropriate services and assistance;
 - vi. Specific concern and approach are adopted for vulnerable or highly exposed group.
- 4. promote the elaboration of action plans on psychosocial support at national, regional and local levels, as appropriate, including the following elements:
 - i. coordination of psychosocial resources and activation plans from the federal to the local level;
 - ii. mapping the trauma risks within a country with its possible psychosocial consequences;
 - iii. mapping resources available for psychosocial support;
 - iv. designate parties responsible for organising and delivering psychosocial support;
 - v. inclusion of psychosocial resources in emergency drills and exercises;
 - vi. description of the services that survivors and bereaved have the right to access including community support, and the duration of services.
- 5. promote appropriate training of professionals and volunteers who work with victims of disasters;
- 6. collaborate with other European and Mediterranean States in exchanging experiences and good practices in the field of psychosocial assistance, ensuring mutual help and support in case of transboundary disaster;
- 7. keep the Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the Agreement informed of measures taken to implement this Recommendation.

**RECOMMENDATION ON RADIOLOGICAL PROTECTION OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES:
IMPROVING PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE**

The Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA):

- A. Taking into account the need for local populations to be aware of the risks to their safety and environment of radiological installations and in particular of Nuclear Power Plants (NPP) and other nuclear facilities;
- B. Recognising the role played by local authorities, given their proximity to the citizen, in the transmission of information on risks and their fundamental importance in risk prevention and management;
- C. Subscribing the principles recognised in the “Convention on access to information, public participation in decision making and access to justice on environmental matters” (Aarhus, 1998) and wishing that local communities improve their information and preparedness for possible emergency situations due to radiological accidents in NPP;
- D. Desirous to spread the lessons learned from the Chernobyl legacy so as to improve European nuclear safety, further involving citizens and local authorities;
- E. Noting the conclusions of the international workshop on “Public authorities and civil society together for a safe European nuclear future”. .Learning from the Chernobyl legacy to make European nuclear energy safer: the role of local communities, authorities and central governments in emergency preparedness and management», Kiev, Ukraine 22-23 September, 2008, (document AP/CAT (2008) 24);

RECOMMEND that Governments:

- 1. promote the dissemination of information on safety of NPP and on procedures for better emergency management, carrying out specific campaigns and exercises in the neighbourhood of NPP; promote regular community-based risk education in these areas;
- 2. facilitate the procedures for local and regional authorities to access radiological and safety information necessary for better preparedness and emergency management, promoting regular contacts between NPP managers and local authorities;
- 3. actively involve local and regional authorities in the elaboration of emergency plans and early warning systems concerning possible radiological or nuclear accidents;
- 4. in emergency situations, provide local and regional authorities with precise, reliable and updated information and include them as appropriate in “emergency management”;
- 5. provide as appropriate financial support to local and regional authorities to embark on the tasks above;
- 6. promote co-operation and exchange of experiences among local authorities of different countries in nuclear safety and radiation protection, supporting appropriate mechanisms such as those proposed in the conclusions of the workshop “Public authorities and civil society together for a safe European nuclear future”, Kiev, Ukraine 22-23 September, 2008, (document AP/CAT (2008) 24).

RECOMMENDATION ON VULNERABILITY OF CULTURAL HERITAGE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA),

- A. Noting that extreme weather events are expected to increase in frequency and intensity in the next decades as a result of climate change;
- B. Recognising that climate change is an important threat to cultural heritage, likely to increase in the coming years;
- C. Conscious that the foreseen changes in temperature and rainfall in Europe and the whole Mediterranean Region will affect the conservation of the cultural heritage, and that rising temperatures, increased or decreased humidity and the frequency of floods, forest fires, coastal erosion, landslides, heat waves, droughts, sea level rise and change in groundwater patterns will have consequences on the stability of historical buildings, integrity of archaeological sites and conservation of materials and collections that may result if their further deterioration or ageing;
- D. Conscious that the deterioration and, in some cases, loss, of cultural heritage would have negative consequences for European and Mediterranean societies, in particular because of its value as a source of identity and livelihood;
- E. Noting that the preservation of existing heritage structures and traditional building materials and methods have advantages in terms of carbon footprint over building new structures and producing new materials;
- F. Mindful of the global dimension of this problem and of the responsibilities of European and Mediterranean states at the world scale, as signatories of numerous international treaties, agreements and strategies within the United Nations system and the Council of Europe;
- G. Recognising that landscapes form part of cultural heritage, but conscious that the effect of climate change on landscapes requires a more specific approach, given the relevance of their biological, environmental and agricultural components;

RECOMMEND Member States to:

- 1. assess the risk to cultural heritage from climate change, including sites, building and objects that may be affected both by climate-related events and/or by gradual change in environmental conditions;
- 2. identify those cultural assets at higher risk and evaluate necessary preventive and adaptation measures;
- 3. promote the adoption of emergency planning for those sites most vulnerable to events such as floods, landslides, coastal erosion and extreme weather-related events;
- 4. assess the potential impact of mitigation measures, such as renovation of buildings for improved heating efficiency, on cultural heritage;
- 5. promote at the national level inter-agency cooperation on climate change and cultural heritage, integrating heritage concerns into disaster risk-reduction policies;
- 6. encourage international cooperation on vulnerability of cultural heritage to climate change, favouring research, action and synergies among international organisations in this field and promoting exchanges of knowledge and experiences within member states and also with other non-member states;
- 7. integrate as appropriate cultural heritage into the adaptation policies to be promoted at international climate change negotiations;
- 8. promote training among heritage professionals aimed to recognise and deal with climate change impacts of cultural heritage;
- 9. foster the inclusion of the appropriate courses within education institutions on the science and management of cultural heritage in a context of climate change;
- 10. promote and support research on the effects of climate change on cultural heritage, including adaptation and prediction strategies, in particular on :
 - a. vulnerability of materials to climate change;
 - b. development of tools to monitor and manage change;

- c. effects of lowering water tables and coastal erosion on archaeological sites and built heritage;
 - d. increase in bio-deterioration risk for cultural assets;
 - e. economic evaluation of heritage loss and degradation as a result of climate change
11. encourage local and regional authorities and people with responsibility on managing cultural heritage to be aware of the risks to sites, buildings and objects from a changing climate.

***RECOMMENDATION ON THE PROMOTION AND STRENGTHENING OF NATIONAL
PLATFORMS FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION***

The Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA),

- A. Taking into account the Hyogo Framework for Action which sets among its 2005-2015 priorities for action support for the creation and strengthening of national platforms for disaster risk reduction and recalling that the priorities for action adopted in 2006 at the Marrakech Ministerial Session of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement also include the promotion of national platforms for disaster risk reduction;
- B. Aware that national platforms on disaster risk reduction as multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral for a are effective mechanisms to facilitate and support coordination across sectors and disciplines, to promote exchange of information and dialogue at national, regional and local level and to inter-link science and the operational sector in order to raise awareness for risk reduction;
- C. Aware also that only a few of the 26 member States of the EUR-OPA Agreement have so far set up national platforms and wishing to promote and support new platforms, including those already planned;
- D. Noting with interest the ISDR document "Guidelines for National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction" which provides guidance to establish or strengthen national platforms for disaster risk reduction and describes the objectives, advantages, principles and major functions of national platforms for disaster risk reduction;

RECOMMEND Member States of the EUR-OPA Agreement to:

- 1. consider the creation of a national platform on disaster risk reduction and, where appropriate, the strengthening of existing national platforms;
- 2. give formal recognition to the national platforms for disaster risk reduction, ensuring their role in promoting dialogue among the different institutional and private actors involved in disaster risk reduction;
- 3. involve local and regional authorities in national platforms as well as the relevant administrations, technical and scientific institutions, rescuers and appropriate non governmental organisations, civil society bodies and the private sector;
- 4. ensure, as appropriate, that the national platform for disaster risk reduction is supported by a body or an institution able to liaise all relevant national partners, promote improvement of disaster risk reduction policies, planning and practice;
- 5. use the potential of national platforms for disaster risk reduction to promote a better information of the public and decision makers on risk, promoting the improvement in society of a culture of risk;
- 6. provide as appropriate sufficient means for national platforms on disaster risk reduction, at the same time making more judicious use of existing resources to permit them to efficiently carry out their coordination and networking activities;
- 7. use national platforms as fora to promote new ideas on disaster risk reduction and to analyse the challenges, shortcomings or values of existing disaster risk reduction policies, including the lessons learnt from recent disasters or emergency situations;
- 8. associate national platforms in the implementation of risk prevention and adaptation policies in the field of spatial planning, city planning and building;
- 9. communicate to the Secretariat of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement and to the UN/ISDR Secretariat, plans to establish national platforms for disaster risk reduction so that both Secretariats may provide guidance, support, training and expertise as required;
- 10. communicate the creation of national platforms to both the Secretariat of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement and to the UN/ISDR Secretariat;
- 11. promote the participation of national platforms for disaster risk reduction into regional coordination initiatives so experiences from national platforms for disaster risk reduction may be shared with other European and Mediterranean States.