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OPEN PARTIAL AGREEMENT ON THE PREVENTION OF,
PROTECTION AGAINST AND ORGANISATION OF RELIEF IN
MAJOR NATURAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL DISASTERS

**11th Ministerial Session of
the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards
Agreement (EUR-OPA)
Marrakech, Morocco, 31st October 2006**

TEXTS ADOPTED

- Recommendations

**Disaster risk reduction through
education at school**

**Local and regional authorities preventing
disasters and facing emergencies**

November 2006

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION THROUGH EDUCATION AT SCHOOL

The Ministers,

- A. Note that the effect of disasters can be reduced if people are aware of disaster risks, prepare for them and know how to act in emergency situations.
- B. Are aware that the school and other educational structures are a very appropriate environment to promote citizens' education on disaster reduction given its role in people's education. They recognise that children and adolescents are more receptive to this type of learning than other population segments and that they can thus convey messages of safety and good practice to their parents and family.
- C. Believe that education to risk reduction should be an important part of national strategies and campaigns on education for sustainable development carried out in the framework of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.
- D. Note that the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) has always given priority to initiatives for the development of programmes on awareness and education to risk, which are fundamental elements of a culture on risk that lead to prevention and to the resilience of communities. In this context they note with satisfaction the progress made in the construction of the Agreement's website on education to risks (Be-Safe-Net) and the pilot projects and experiences on this topic carried out in several States which may be extended to all the member States of the Agreement.
- E. Wish to contribute,
- with regard to the Agreement, to the implementation of chapter 3 of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 *“Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels”*, and
 - with regard to European States, to the implementation of the Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.
- F. Welcome the World Disaster Reduction Campaign (2006-2007) of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) launched in co-operation with UNESCO under the theme *“Disaster Risk Reduction Begins at School”* and express their support for a firm involvement of the Agreement and its activities in the campaign. In this context they take note of the conclusions of the International Congress on Education and Training on Disaster Prevention (Madrid, 26-28 September 2006).

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

I. Examine in detail at national level their programmes on risk education at school level to assess whether they provide the knowledge and practice needed by children to be safe from disaster risks.

II. Consider drafting and implementing a national strategy on education for disaster reduction through the collaborative effort of different Ministers and experts in a multi-stakeholders platform, taking into account as appropriate, international recommendations, experiences and standards.

In the drafting and implementation of national strategies, member States are in particular recommended to:

1. Integrate disaster risk reduction into all relevant subjects, programmes and courses at school and provide specific subject programmes, courses and practical activities on risk reduction, both in formal school curricula and in vocational or extra-curricula activities.

2. Promote that knowledge transmitted on disaster risk reduction covers all risks possibly incurred by children and in particular:

- the causes, the origin and the effects of disasters (both natural and technological hazards)
- the methods of protecting people by planning, preparedness and prevention
- the type of life-saving behaviour in case of emergency.

Ensure that such knowledge does not remain purely theoretical but that it also involves preparedness, action and appropriate practical exercises.

3. Encourage the whole school community to participate actively, at all levels, in disaster reduction, focusing on the particular risks of each school and its surrounding community and fostering dialogue, collaboration and involvement of professionals (i.e. firemen or civil protection personnel), local authorities and risk experts. In this context, encourage in particular parents to be involved in education for disaster risk reduction so as to raise their own awareness of risk and to keep themselves informed on the correct behaviour to adopt in an emergency situation.

4. Promote teacher training in disaster risk reduction by putting at their disposal the necessary information, courses and incentives.

5. Promote the elaboration and exchange of relevant educational materials such as films and other visual aids, pedagogic and didactic publications, manuals and brochures, case studies and other suitable educational tools, using as appropriate new information technology and experiences from other schools or countries.
6. Promote research and innovation on education for disaster reduction, supporting pilot projects in schools and publishing and extending positive experiences.
7. Support international co-operation on education for disaster reduction, in particular through the work of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), UNESCO, ISDR and other fora.
8. Encourage educational experiences on disaster reduction at schools to also be used to assess the safety of school buildings against major hazards, drawing the attention of authorities to the need for making, where necessary, the school safer for children and the school community.
9. Encourage the appropriate bodies to provide adequate financial means to implement the above measures by the development or reinforcement of appropriate mechanisms.

Furthermore the Ministers RECOMMEND that member States and observer States inform the Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the Agreement by the end of 2007 of the measures taken to implement the above recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION

LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES PREVENTING DISASTERS AND FACING EMERGENCIES

The Ministers,

A. Note that disaster risk reduction is a responsibility of all societies which requires the commitment and joint effort of national, regional and local authorities.

B. Recognise that many of the competencies of regional and local authorities in the following fields:

- spatial planning
- licensing and monitoring of potential hazardous industrial activities
- building of public facilities and housing
- fire-fighting
- transport
- health
- environment
- water management
- education, etc.

are of fundamental importance in risk management, in providing early warning and in effective rapid response in case of emergencies.

C. Note that local authorities, because of their proximity to the citizen, are often the first to be confronted with disasters and emergency situations so that the preventive measures taken previous to an event and their response during the first hours of an emergency are crucial to minimise loss of lives and property.

D. Are aware that, in spite of this important role, local authorities often lack financial resources, are not always provided with the necessary information and in some cases, do not have sufficient technical capacity to confront emergency situations of a certain dimension and consequently they may not be well prepared to face major disasters.

E. Welcome:

i. the renewed interest of local and regional authorities to become more actively involved in risk prevention and management, as illustrated by the work of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (CLRAE):

- the “Slavutych Appeal” launched in March 2006 as a conclusion of the Conference “Chernobyl: Twenty years after. Local and regional authorities facing catastrophes”

- Recommendation 169 (2005) on major oil spills: the role of local authorities
- Recommendation 168 (2005) on natural and industrial disasters: local authorities facing emergencies
- Recommendation 108 (2002) on local authorities confronting natural disasters and emergencies
- Recommendation 42 (1998) on nuclear safety and local regional democracy

ii. the creation, under the aegis of the CLRAE, of the European Forum on Local and Regional Disaster Management.

F. Express their wish and commitment to closely cooperate and coordinate as befitting with local and regional authorities in all relevant fields of risk prevention and management, including institutional and legal reinforcement, information exchange, school education and citizens' awareness, risk and vulnerability assessment and monitoring, early warning, public information in emergency situations, making public buildings, housing and infrastructures more resistant to disasters, elaboration and implementation of contingency plans, as well as emergency management, response and recovery operations, reconstruction financing and any other key issue that may contribute to making communities more resilient to natural disasters and technological accidents.

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

1. Examine at national level appropriate legal and administrative procedures relative to disaster risk reduction and management of emergency situations to assess whether the role of local and regional authorities is adequately considered, with a view to improving if necessary, the coordination of national, regional and local authorities in their respective fields of competence.
2. Encourage and facilitate the implication of local and regional authorities in disaster reduction, in particular by involving them where appropriate in risk assessment and monitoring, elaboration of contingency plans and development and maintenance of early warning systems; in this sense adopt a multi-authority approach in preventive action and in emergency management.
3. Provide local and regional authorities with all the necessary information they require to make their communities safe and able to respond to natural and industrial disasters, both as a matter of routine and in a time of crisis.
4. Promote community-based risk education and awareness in co-operation and partnership with local and regional authorities.

5. Provide appropriate financial support and incentives to local and regional authorities to carry out the necessary disaster risk reduction activities on matters within their competence.

Furthermore, the Ministers RECOMMEND local and regional authorities to:

6. be attentive to risk aspects in spatial planning decisions, particularly in the location of infrastructures and houses, services and industry in areas prone to flooding, landslides, avalanches, marine risks, industrial risks, seismic risks or other major hazards, also ensuring that new infrastructures do not increase the vulnerability to existing risks;

7. ensure, in areas of seismic risk, that safe building codes are implemented and that the safety of old buildings is improved, particularly those used for schools, hospitals or other public services, taking into account as appropriate the local risk cultures;

8. re-evaluate, as necessary, the industrial risks of activities under their responsibility, especially when operation permits were granted a long time ago when risk awareness was far more limited or wherever subsequent development decisions have resulted in causing industries which were once isolated to now be surrounded by residential areas;

9. prepare risk maps of areas under their responsibility in collaboration as necessary with governmental authorities, scientists and risk experts, also identifying historical records of disasters or major events caused by natural hazards;

10. reinforce, where appropriate, human resource capacities at local or regional levels in the field of risk assessment and effective response to disasters developing the appropriate capacity building programmes which would target elected officials and professionals as well as community-based volunteers;

11. protect vulnerable cultural and environmental assets, inter alia by assessing the vulnerability of built cultural heritage and historical settings to major risks, taking appropriate prevention measures and by ensuring that valuable environmental areas including water courses are safe from industrial pollution that may be caused by industrial or mining accidents;

12. participate, as appropriate, in the development of early warning systems, establishing the necessary surveillance of hazards likely to affect the territory under their responsibility and reinforcing alarm systems and other means of alert and information aimed at the local population;

13. prepare local contingency plans and programmes, in coordination with national and regional authorities, and carry out the necessary exercises while executing these plans, involving in particular schools and vulnerable population groups;
14. promote risk education in schools and higher education institutions, paying special attention to local risk and the conduct to be observed in emergency situations; promote the training in schools of teachers with special responsibility in risk management; enhance local knowledge in risk and favour its transmission;
15. promote citizen participation and involvement in risk issues, with special emphasis on local risks, enhance community-based volunteering in risk related activities;
16. engage in making schools, hospitals and other appropriate public buildings “safe from disaster”, also including the strengthening of their capacity to work and host people in emergency situations;
17. promote sustainable forestry and sound water course management so as to minimise risks associated to floods or landslides which might have more damaging effects due to environmental degradation; restore, where appropriate, deforested areas;
18. set up efficient response mechanisms and well trained teams to cope with disaster emergencies, coordinating as appropriate with other local and regional authorities, with government civil protection authorities and with community based organisations engaged in disaster management;
19. promote the collaboration and sharing of resources in risk management issues with other neighbouring communities (i.e. pooling of services and know-how, joint education programmes, coordinated emergency and response means, etc.);
20. promote that appropriate information is provided to the public on risks, particularly in emergency situations, taking into account the citizens’ right to be informed on their safety.

The Ministers invite the member States of the Council of Europe which are not party 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.