

**EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN MAJOR
HAZARDS AGREEMENT (EUR-OPA)**

Strasbourg, 21 September 2006

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Or. E.

**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**

RECOMMENDATION

on

**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.