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European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA)

83rd Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents

Meeting report

20 May 2025

Online meeting

*Document prepared by the Secretariat
of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement*

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83rd Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents (CPC)
Tuesday, 20 May 2025

Welcome address

Krzysztof Zyman, Executive Secretary of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement welcomed the EUR-OPA permanent correspondents, observers, experts and participants to the meeting. Present online were the permanent correspondents and/or their representatives from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, the Serbia and Slovak Republic.

1. Adoption of the draft agenda [AP/CAT\(2025\)OJ02](#)

The draft agenda was adopted without amendment.

2. Statement by the Executive Secretary, Mr Krzysztof Zyman

Mr Zyman recalled the main decisions of the last CPC plenary meeting held on 21-22 November 2024.

- The CPC agreed to consider drafting guidelines and a recommendation on “State obligations in the face of risks and threats of natural hazards”, that would take into account the CoE Strategy on Environment and other relevant documents.
- The current Medium-Term Plan 2021 - 2025 would continue to run until the next ministerial meeting to be held in 2027 to coincide with the 40th anniversary of the Agreement. The period leading up to the next ministerial meeting should be used to discuss future priorities of the Agreement. Prof. Balducci reiterated the European Center for Disaster Medicine’s (CEMEC) willingness to host the next ministerial meeting in San Marino and this proposal was unanimously agreed to.
- A proposal for the project entitled “Enhancing Civilian Preparedness for Technological Disasters in Ukraine (ECP-TDU)” was elaborated and consulted on with the Ukrainian authorities. The proposal has yet to secure funding from CoE member States.

Mr Zyman informed the Committee further about his participation in the following upcoming events:

1. The Euro-Mediterranean Forum for Disaster Risk Governance, Health Preparedness, and Networking Advancement to be held on 22 – 24 May 2025 in San Marino, organised by the European Centre for Disaster Medicine (CEMEC);
2. The Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction to be held in Geneva on 4-6 June. EUR-OPA is actively participating together with DG ECHO and UNDRR. Ms Sofia Karma from the European Centre for Forest Fires in Athens will participate and make a presentation about concrete measures that stem from the work in the case study “Inclusive community engagement for strengthening disaster resilience: evacuation exercise with participation of persons with disabilities in Athens, Greece”. The platform presents an opportunity for

the CoE to highlight its work on the climate crisis and, more broadly, protection of the environment thus fleshing out the Reykjavik declaration.

3. Plenary meeting of the Global Fire Management Hub organised by the FAO in Rome on 10-12 June 2025. The Agreement will also be represented by Professor Johan Goldammer, Director of the Global Fire Monitoring Centre in Freiburg, Germany.

3. Information on the recent developments of the Council of Europe activities in the field of environment, Mr Gianluca Silvestrini, Head of Department (a.i.)

Mr Silvestrini recalled the Reykjavik Declaration which was adopted at the 4th Council of Europe's Summit of Heads of State and Government in Reykjavik in May 2023. Appendix V of the Declaration underlines the urgency of taking coordinated action to protect the environment by countering the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change and loss of biodiversity, affirming also that human rights and the environment are intertwined and that a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is integral to the full enjoyment of human rights by present and future generations. In January 2024, a new "Directorate of Social Rights, Health and Environment" was created to bring together environmental activities under the new "Reykjavik Process and Environment Department" comprising of EUR-OPA, the Bern Convention and the Landscape Convention to facilitate *inter alia* transversal cooperation and synergies.

Additionally, an Ad Hoc Multidisciplinary Group on the Environment (GME) was set up grouping delegates of the CoE member States, international organisations and NGOs, to develop the CoE Strategy on the Environment. Moreover, an Intersecretariat Task Force was created with representatives from the CoE institutions and services to coordinate the development of the Strategy on the Environment. At the Committee of Ministers' ministerial session held in Luxembourg on 14 May, two new instruments were adopted: the CoE Convention on the protection of the environment through criminal law and the CoE Strategy on the Environment. These instruments promote a multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral approach on matters related also to natural disasters.

The Intergovernmental Committee on Human Rights (CDDH) completed its study on the need for and feasibility of an additional instrument or instruments in the field of human rights and the environment, with conclusions and recommendations for further action, and submitted to the Committee of Ministers for political decision.

4. Statutory meetings

Meeting report of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents Bureau, 20 February 2025 [AP/CAT\(2025\)01](#)

Report of the Joint Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents and Directors of specialised centres, 21-22 November 2024 [AP/CAT\(2024\)07](#)

<p><u>Decision</u>: both meeting reports were adopted without amendment.</p>
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5. Presentation on “Perceptions of global warming and threats of natural hazards and on eco-emotions and differences in perception of populations” Professor Rouven Doran, Department of Psychosocial Science, University of Bergen, Norway

Prof. Doran’s presentation would be in continuation of and complementary to Prof Elisabeth Lambert’s working paper on “State obligations and people’s right to be protected from the serious effects of global warming: realisation of the right to a healthy and sustainable environment in the face of risks and threats of natural hazards” which she presented to the CPC on 21 November 2024 in Paris.

Prof. Doran’s presentation centred on three main points.

- Public perception of global warming and its impact, and the threats of natural hazards in Europe. This concerns how people perceive climate change (CC). According to a survey carried out by the European Investment Bank (2024) in the 27 EU countries, 80% of respondents had experienced at least one extreme weather event (e.g., extreme heat, heavy storms) in the past five years and 68% had suffered at least one direct consequence of extreme weather (e.g., transport disruptions, health problems). 72% stated they will have to change their lifestyle due to CC, 35% believed they would eventually have to relocate to less climate-vulnerable places, and 28% specified they will have to consider relocating to a less hot region or country.
- Psychological and contextual factors in the processing of information about risks associated with natural hazards. If CC is construed as being psychologically distant, this can lower the perceived threat and concerns about its impacts. In addition to experiences with hazardous events, there are multiple factors that contribute to explain differences in risk perception. Several patterns emerge in the psychological literature on risk perception i.e., how individuals process information about natural hazards subjectively. Examples range from motivated reasoning, which can prevent people from attributing their experience with an extreme weather event like flooding to anthropogenic CC, to cognitive biases that can lead people to underestimate the likelihood of such an event occurring near to where they live (and instead construing it as something that happens to other people and/or in distant countries). This could be addressed through tailored risk communication that focuses on local and regional impacts of global warming, which may help reducing the psychological distance of CC.
- Emotional responses to the current and future impacts of global warming. For many people, CC has moved from being construed as an abstract issue to something that is increasingly felt and experienced in their daily life. This relates to how people feel when they think about CC, encompassing a broad range of negative (e.g., anxiety) but also positive emotions (e.g., hope). Recent research on emotional responses among different populations shows that negative emotions towards CC tend to be associated with reduced mental health and self-reports of impaired functioning, especially among young people. Associations between climate anxiety and mental health can be found for populations in different world regions, irrespective of their assessed vulnerability to CC impacts. However, climate-related emotions can also be a catalyst for public engagement by rallying support and involvement in mitigation action.

6. Mr Andreas Kleiser, Director of Policy and Cooperation, International Commission on Missing Persons ([ICMP](#))

Mr Kleiser presented the activities of the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), created in 1996 at the G-7 Summit in Lyon, France, to develop and apply good governance and the rule of law and specifically to address the issue of missing persons, resulting from the wars in the former Yugoslavia. It currently has 10 member states and its mandate includes persons missing as a result of wars, human rights abuses, organised violence, disasters and migration. ICMP's mandate is based on the human rights linked to security and liberty, dignity of the person, the right to life, the right not to be subjected to torture, the right to family and identity.

In the context of disasters, ICMP was deployed following the tsunami which occurred in 2004 in December in Southeastern Asia, Typhoon Frank (2008) and Typhoon Hiyan in 2013.

Challenges faced by ICMP include:

- intelligence and digital constraints to locate missing persons e.g., in Mediterranean shores, processing of information.
- absence of available or willing reference donors for genetic testing,
- limitations of STR analysis i.e. methodology predominantly used by ICMP e.g., in the case of burned bones, remains submerged in water, mummification, etc.
- errors in identifying human remains or misidentifications.

ICMP undertakes targeted outreach campaigns e.g., in Syria and in other third countries, to collect information and also provide a space for families to bring forward any grievances they harbour on the handling of issues which concerned them. [Link to presentation](#)

7. Programme of activities 2025 ([AP/CAT\(2021\)11](#)) and the Budgetary situation of EUR-OPA ([AP/CAT\(2024\)05](#)).

The Agreement has been operating with a reduced budget since 2023, with no change in membership in the years 2023-25. There are 22 Parties to the Agreement, of which 20 CoE member States and 2 non-member States, Morocco and Lebanon.

Mr Zyman reiterated the significant budgetary decline since 2022, which has led to cutting staff and activities. This situation is aggravated by arrears in the non-payment of contributions by Morocco and Lebanon in the past years. The Secretariat is continuing efforts to resolve this situation. In this context it is important to recall that the Agreement financially independent and solely funded through the contributions of participating member states.

In spite of these budgetary challenges, the Agreement will hold its Joint Meeting of CPCs and Directors of Specialised Centres in November.

Grant agreements have been concluded in 2025 with 10 scientific centres. The BeSafeNet Olympiad was held in March 2025, but the award ceremony is postponed until 2026, on account of financial restraint.

Mr Zyman made two proposals:

- 1) As EUR-OPA's 40th anniversary comes up in March 2027, the EUR-OPA ministerial meeting shall be held on this occasion in San Marino, at the proposal of the Sammarinese authorities. It is important to note in this context that ministerial sessions were already held twice in San Marino (in 1992 and 2003) and that CEMEC is one of the founding scientific centres participating in Agreement's work from its outset.
- 2) EUR-OPA should, taking advantage of the work already carried out in the framework of the reflection on the state obligations and people's right to be protected from the serious effects of global warming, consider adopting guidelines and recommendations on citizen-centered prevention and preparedness in the face of risks and threats of natural hazards.

Following Mr Zyman's address, Ms Popa (Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration, substitute of the CPC representative for the meeting, Romania) remarked on the increase in Romania's financial contributions to the Agreement and highlighted the importance to capitalize on the results of the projects, the activities of the specialised centres and other activities in general.

Ms Popa suggested that the themes for project proposals could be established through consultations whereby the national authorities would propose specific themes to be addressed by the specialised centres. Ms Popa expressed the wish to further discuss these issues bilaterally. Mr Zyman agreed with Ms Popa's remarks and invited Romania to join the Subcommittee on Projects.

He explained further that in recent years the increases in financial contributions only reflect inflation and emphasised that financial decisions of this kind were taken within the standard budgetary procedure involving representatives of all member states of the Council of Europe.

8. Mr Arnold Pronto, Director of the Codification Division of the UN Office of Legal Affairs and Ms Martina Müller, UNDRR Programme Management Officer [UNDRR Information Note on PPED](#) and [UN draft articles on PPED](#)

Mr Pronto addressed the meeting via a pre-recorded video message in which he gave a broad overview on the question of legal regulation of the impact of disasters, pointing out the lack of any existing global legal framework in this subject area. [Link to speech](#)

Ms Muller informed about the proposed UN Convention on the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters (PPED), and the reasons for developing the draft articles and the current status of proceedings. Ms Muller detailed the disaster risk reduction aspects of the draft convention text, how they related to the Sendai Framework and what to expect going forward.

The main aim of the text is to support member states in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction considerations across intergovernmental processes with the aim of reducing disasters and preventing new risks, mitigating the existing risks, ensuring that policies and strategies translate into concrete actions, strengthening disaster reduction governance and recovery efforts.

The draft text of the Convention is significant in that it contributes already to the overall efforts towards DRR and resilience building at national and regional levels and is intended as a legally

binding instrument whereby member states would introduce legislation and regulations to prevent, mitigate and prepare for disasters. The PPED Convention aligns with the Sendai Framework which places important responsibilities on member states to reduce the risk of hazards turning into disasters.

The UN has invited all member states to suggest amendments, comment or contribute to the PPED draft text. Ms Muller indicated that the CPCs could consult with their MFA to submit proposals to the UN up to the end of 2025. Furthermore, in 2027, states will have an opportunity to finalise the text of the Convention at a future conference. [Link to presentation](#) and [text](#).

9. Any other business

No other issues were raised.

10. Date and place of next meeting

Mr Zyman had proposed to hold the Joint Meeting of CPC and directors of specialised centres on Thursday 13 and Friday 14 November 2025. However, due to logistical reasons, the meeting will now hold on Thursday 6 and Friday 7 November in Paris.