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14<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting of the European and Mediterranean  
Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA)

## **Building More Inclusive Societies through Better Disaster Risk Management**

Meeting report

By videoconference from  
Matosinhos, Portugal

24 November 2021

13:00 CET

**Chairperson: Minister Eduardo Cabrita, host, Minister for Home Affairs, Portugal**

Mr Krzysztof Zyman, Executive Secretary of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement, welcomed the participants and thanked Mr Eduardo Cabrita, Minister for Home Affairs, Portugal for hosting EUR-OPA's 14<sup>th</sup> Ministerial meeting. He remarked that Portugal had also hosted the Ministerial meeting held in October 2016, in Lisbon, thereby demonstrating the Portuguese authorities strong commitment to and interest in the prevention and protection against risks and providing relief in case of disasters. The participation of twenty countries (by videolink) also confirmed the importance the member States attach to the Agreement and to its continued relevance and contribution 34 years after its creation. The participants included an observer State France, the Holy See, the European Commission, UNESCO, UNDRR, European Space Agency and the European Development Bank. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Moldova and Lebanon did not attend.

Mr Zyman introduced the agenda [AP/CAT \(2021\) OJ 02](#). There were no comments or questions regarding the agenda.

Several welcome speeches followed:

**Mr Eduardo Cabrita**, Minister for Home Affairs, Portugal

Minister Cabrita welcomed the participants and expressed the Portuguese Government's honour to host the EUR-OPA Ministerial meeting in Matosinhos, Portugal for the second time. He stressed the increased pertinence of the theme "Building more inclusive societies through better disaster risk management". The Covid-19 pandemic has confirmed the need for a multisectoral approach to tackle new emergencies and heightened risks. Minister Cabrita stressed that the Agreement's network of specialised centres is an important scientific platform which addresses risk prevention and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in a broad way, in order to provide the right tools aimed at preventing and facing disasters. In his words, the network is key to the exchange of information, gathering of best practices, sharing experiences, coordination and development of comprehensive tools and establishing guidelines.

He reminded the participants about the complex responsibility to ensure the protection of vulnerable persons such as migrants, asylum seekers and refugees and persons with disabilities. Portugal has recently published a National Strategy for a Preventive Civil Protection which sets out five strategic goals, in line with the Sendai Framework aimed at reducing risks overall for citizens and vulnerable groups.

Minister Cabrita declared the Ministerial meeting open.

**Mr Matjaz Gruden**, Director, Directorate of Democratic Participation, Council of Europe

Mr Gruden addressed the meeting on behalf of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. He expressed his gratitude to Minister Cabrita and the Portuguese authorities for hosting the Ministerial meeting for the second time.

Mr Gruden reminded the participants about the increasing frequency of disasters worldwide in addition to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. In spite of these challenges, the Agreement's network of specialised centres has continued to make important advances in the last two years. For example, the European Centre for New Technologies of Risk Management (ECNTRM, Moscow) is developing technology to detect and rapidly analyse socially significant events, to enable the authorities make timely and effective decisions. Further, the European Centre on Vulnerability of Industrial Lifelines Systems (ECILS, Skopje) and the European Centre on the Prevention and Forecasting of Earthquakes (ECPFE, Athens) perform pre-earthquake vulnerability assessments of historical buildings. The Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Insular Coastal Dynamics (ICoD, La Valetta) developed a methodology to assess risks related to coastal hazards,

in partnership with the European Centre on Geomorphological Hazards (CERG, Strasbourg). These were just a sample of the relevant projects carried out by the specialised centres.

Mr Gruden referenced the two recommendations which respond to issues relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. The documents were in line with the Council of Europe human rights approach and the principle of Non-discrimination of vulnerable persons in democratic participation. The Agreement's Medium-Term Plan 2021 to 2025 ensures the inclusion of vulnerable groups in disaster risk reduction. It sets out how the Agreement aims to work towards achieving the seven measurable targets set by the Sendai Framework and contribute to the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda.

**Ms Shamila Nair-Bedouelle, Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**

Ms Nair-Bedouelle reiterated the general concerns about the increase in frequency and intensity of natural hazards in the region, due to climate change. These events, in addition to Covid-19 have led the United Nations to put Disaster Risk Reduction on the agenda of various UN agencies and to adopt a multi-dimensional risk approach.

Ms Nair-Bedouelle affirmed the importance of the two themes of the Ministerial meeting; ensuring the inclusion of vulnerable persons in the disaster preparedness efforts and developing the Agreement's actions to face new challenges posed by major hazards. They are critical topics to increase the region's resilience in the face of disasters. She shared some highlights of UNESCO's recent work, including the VISUS methodology, used to assess the safety of school buildings and currently being applied in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It provides tools and information for stakeholders to make science-based decisions aimed at improving schools safety.

In 2020, UNESCO collaborated with the Council of Europe on a research project examining the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on education. Both Organisations jointly studied the opportunities that the pandemic could provide to reshape education systems to maximise student participation across Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Joint efforts would also continue between UNDRR, EU and the Agreement on regional and global action on DRR.

Mr Zyman thanked Ms Nair-Bedouelle for her address, confirming the long standing cooperation between the Council of Europe and UNESCO. He expressed his satisfaction at UNESCO's active partnership with the Agreement and looked forward to developing the cooperation under the Medium-Term Plan 2021-2025.

**Ms Paraskevi Michou, Director-General at DG for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, European Commission**

Ms Michou underlined the importance of the meeting topic "*building more inclusive societies through better disaster risk management*". The European Commission (EC) contributes to this objective with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism which recently celebrated its 20-year anniversary. It is the key component in the disaster risk management architecture, providing support during and response to disasters across Europe. An important new feature in the mechanism are the Disaster Resilience Goals and scenario-planning which provide better understanding of disaster risk in the EU. In addition, they demonstrate the added value of emergency management coordination. EUR-OPA is relevant in thinking beyond national borders and adopting a cross-border, cross-sectoral approach.

The EC continues to support third countries in prevention and preparedness, increasing capacity building efforts through regional initiatives in the Western Balkans, the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods. Given that disasters impact vulnerable groups and people with disabilities differently, the EC is committed to

building a more inclusive society. In particular, the EC is working to scale up disability assistance and reinforce their capacity to offer equal assistance to all persons in disasters. Better disaster risk management is a collective responsibility at all levels and the discussions of the Ministerial meeting will contribute to this goal.

Mr Zyman thanked Ms Michou for her address and for sharing the important action undertaken by the EC. He expressed his appreciation of the EC engaging with the Council of Europe and the Agreement. He looked forward to developing further cooperation covering many fields through the new Medium-Term Plan, in particular, as the situation regarding hazards and disasters is constantly evolving.

## **Inclusion of vulnerable groups in preparing for and responding to disasters**

Mr Zyman introduced the topic, explaining the history of the Agreement in developing ethical principles by including vulnerable groups in its scope of work. The current pandemic has focused the attention of the Agreement and other organisations on its consequences for the most vulnerable groups. Two important studies were commissioned by the Agreement in 2020 on the effect of the pandemic on people with disabilities and on migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. Once these reports were drafted, they were discussed at the meetings of the CPC and this led to preparing the draft recommendations.

### **Mr Christos Stylianides, Minister of Climate Change and Civil Protection, Greece**

Minister Stylianides stated that the inclusion of vulnerable groups in disaster prevention and response is a critical and moral obligation. The Agreement's new Medium-Term Plan underscores their inclusion in all aspects of DRR. Vulnerable groups are doubly victimized before and after disasters. Therefore, it is necessary to take additional steps to protect these groups. Policies can be designed and implemented based on needs expressed through feedback from vulnerable groups.

Minister Stylianides further urged member States to join forces to tackle the climate crisis and build resilient communities. He thanked the member States for their assistance and solidarity during the devastating wildfires which occurred last summer. Furthermore, he invited the Permanent Correspondents to look into the recommendations and work together to identify further measures for DRR, focusing special attention to the needs of vulnerable groups. He assured the Agreement of Greece's continued commitment.

Mr Zyman thanked him for Greece long-standing engagement with EUR-OPA, and their collaboration through the specialised centres.

### **Mr Roberto Ciavatta, Minister Secretary of State for Health, San Marino**

On the issue of disasters and persons with disabilities, the European Centre for Disaster Medicine (CEMEC, San Marino) has developed informative videos in six languages. Minister Ciavatta emphasised the overall importance of making specific preparations for vulnerable groups in the pre-emergency phases. For example, the needs of the blind should be considered and measures adapted to include them. Emergency systems should aim to not overlook persons with disabilities but rather provide the required expertise. The Covid-19 pandemic exposed the shortcomings in dealing with severely disabled persons, the elderly and those receiving critical care. The welfare system, although based on maximum protection, did not always guarantee the full respect for human rights of the vulnerable. San Marino's Care protocol aims to facilitate

greater integrated management between the hospitals and the territorial services to guarantee more levels of care.

Mr Zyman expressed his appreciation of San Marino's long-standing engagement with the Agreement and thanked Minister Ciavatta for his profound reflection on several important issues affecting people with disabilities.

The Executive Secretary introduced the draft Recommendations.

Both recommendations result from the reflections of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents (CPC) and aim to develop new standards, thus providing guidance to the Agreement's member States and beyond. K. Zyman expressed his appreciation for the work carefully carried out by the CPCs and the sharing of their experiences in the process.

The draft [recommendation on "Enabling and protecting persons with disabilities before during and after public health emergencies resulting from viral and other pathogenic pandemics"](#), in particular, requests that the authorities promote standards for the protection and care of people with disabilities through information campaigns and make health care facilities accessible to persons with all forms of disabilities. Furthermore, when planning their national risk reduction policies, in the planning processes, training curricula, and emergency response practice, the authorities are asked to integrate specific measures to reduce vulnerability and exposure to people with disabilities during emergencies such as the current pandemic or emergencies resulting from viral and other pathogenic pandemics. The recommendation further asks that medical codes of ethics and other deontological codes of practice are reviewed to ensure that the provision of healthcare during disasters fully conform to the provisions of the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities and jurisprudence of the UN Committee on the rights of persons with disabilities. Measures to be adopted to counteract natural and technological disasters should provide people with disabilities with flexible access and flexible work arrangements that take into account their disabilities. The recommendation asks that the Agreement continues to address this question through the development of standards through sharing experience, awareness raising, undertaking training programmes and promoting good practice.

The draft recommendation on "[The inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in public health emergencies resulting from viral or other pathogenic pandemics](#)" contributes to the ongoing important work of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees. In particular, it stipulates that all migrants, asylum seekers and refugees regardless of their nationality or migratory status be included in disaster risk policies linked to public health emergencies. Furthermore, it asks that these groups have adequate access to information, health services, shelter, food and other social support comparable to what is offered to the rest of the population. In pandemic situations, some migrants possess unique experience and skills which could be used for the benefit of the society. In countries which ratified the Lisbon Convention on the recognition of higher education qualifications in the European region and the European qualifications passport for refugees, their skills should be harnessed when combatting health emergencies.

Given that both draft recommendations were extensively discussed by the Committee of Permanent Correspondents at several meetings, the Executive Secretary proposed that both recommendations be formally adopted. No objections were voiced to this proposal.

**Decision:** The Ministers adopted, by consensus, the Recommendation "enabling and protecting persons with disabilities before, during and after public health emergencies resulting from viral or other pathogenic pandemics" and the Recommendation "Inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in public health emergencies resulting from viral or other pathogenic pandemics".

## Developing EUR-OPA's actions to meet the new challenges posed by natural, technological and biological hazards

[Mr Damir Trut, Director General, Civil Protection Directorate, Croatia](#) attended on behalf of **Mr Davor Božinović**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, Croatia.

Mr Trut underlined the importance of exchange of information and cooperation internationally. In the last two years, frequent disasters including two earthquakes which struck in Croatia in 2020 during a major pandemic showed the importance of establishing a resilient response system, information sharing and advocacy of UNDRR, EUR-OPA and the EU.

Croatia has developed a national risk assessment and a capability assessment and will shortly adopt its first national disaster risk management strategy. Mr Trut pointed out that the Agreement's Medium-Term Plan 2021-2025 highlights the disaster risk management priorities whilst ensuring that the activities are in accordance with the Sendai Framework. The Agreement facilitates exchange of experiences for member and non-member countries in various disasters. In the light of this, Croatia is committed to achieving stronger co-operation with other countries, participate in events organised by the Agreement and consult EUR-OPA's relevant recommendations.

Mr Zyman thanked Mr Trut for Croatia's active participation in the Agreement and in particular, its dynamic chairing of the CPC Bureau.

[Mr Marián Dritomský, General Director, Section of Crisis Management, Ministry of Interior, Slovak Republic](#)

Mr Dritomský pointed out that the Slovak Republic participates in its first Ministerial meeting, since joining the Agreement in 2018. He underlined his country's support for the Agreement. The Slovak Republic faces major global challenges such as climate change, migration, economic instability, increased disparity between the rich and poor, the rise of extremism etc. In the last two years, the Covid-19 pandemic has continued to impact many aspects of life. Besides its devastating effect on communities, it has also demonstrated a global preparedness for a large-scale hazard. Each State, in addition to identifying its internal strengths, should take advantage of international cooperation and coordinated action. Global actions include improving the capacities of all stakeholders. Referring to the Agreement's Medium-Term Plan 2021-2025, Mr Dritomský underlined the urgent need for States to move towards a more transversal leadership role rather than the standard top down approach, citing the importance of information sharing and active involvement of citizens in prevention and preparedness in order to maximise protection.

The Slovak Republic's recent National Disaster Risk Management Strategy is in compliance with key international documents, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Lisbon Treaty and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Mr Dritomský fully acknowledged and supported Council of Europe's mission through the Agreement's past and present activities and pledged to be guided by them in developing the national strategic documents and policies. He confirmed that a specialised centre would be created to develop collaborative projects as part of a nation-wide initiative to promote intergovernmental cooperation and support collaborative actions.

**Mr Costas Constantinou, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior, Cyprus**

Mr Constantinou shared Cyprus's recent experience managing the Covid-19 pandemic and several large forest fires last summer. The fast-moving fires which affected an area of fifty square kilometres necessitated the evacuation of ten villages and required providing shelter for the evacuees. Contingency plans were activated to mobilise an adequate response and international assistance was requested through the European Civil Protection Mechanism and bilateral agreements with third countries. Mr Constantinou highlighted the importance of cooperation between neighbouring countries and expressed his appreciation for support received from other countries, particularly Greece and Israel during the wildfires.

Cyprus is willing to share, under the Sendai Framework, scientific and technological expertise with member States with the support of the Council of Europe and the European Union. This would include, but is not limited to, assessing data of disaster risks, vulnerability, exposure and its effects as well as lessons learnt. Under the umbrella of the Agreement's Medium-Term Plan 2021-2025, Cyprus aims to contribute to multilateral efforts to build more resilient societies. As sharing information with citizens at the early stage of a potential disaster would be key to saving lives, he expressed Cyprus's profound interest to adopt early warning systems as the next goal to be pursued by the Agreement. He assured the Executive Secretary of Cyprus's full support of the Agreement's initiatives to meet these challenges.

Mr Zyman thanked Mr Constantinou for his remarks about the Agreement's future work and for highlighting the necessity of cooperation between States. He reiterated the Agreement's desire to help, through its network of scientific centres providing information, reminding that the CPC is a network of cooperation which can be used to minimise reaction time during emergencies.

**Mr Vladimir Soloviev, Director of the Department for International Cooperation of EMERCOM of Russia**

Mr Soloviev extended greetings on behalf of Mr Alexander Chupriyan, Acting Minister of the Russian Federation for the Civil Defence Emergencies and the Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters (EMERCOM). 2021 marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the accession of the Russian Federation to the Council of Europe. Crisis management has always been one of the key areas of cooperation between Russia and other Council of Europe member States, members of the Agreement. The Ministry of Emergency Situations of Russia is the leading executive body of the Russian Federation responsible for cooperation with the Council of Europe's Partial Open Framework Agreement on prediction, prevention and assistance in the event of disasters and technological accidents. Significantly, the Russian Federation contributes to over 40% of the Agreement's budget. Russia has previously hosted two EUR-OPA ministerial meetings. Further, the Russian Federation provided assistance to several Council of Europe member States including Greece, Italy, France and Portugal, to extinguish fires and provide rescue following floods, earthquakes and other natural disasters. Cooperation extends to research and development in disaster risk and response. Mr Soloviev remarked that the network of specialised centres of the Agreement and its expert community are one of the most valuable resources of the Council of Europe.

Within the scientific network, the Russian Federation is represented by the European Centre for New Technologies of Risk Management (ECNTRM, Moscow). Through its cooperation with the Agreement, ECNTRM has implemented more than 15 research projects in disaster risk and response, educational programmes to help people to react to emergency situations, create an integrated system for early warning or remote automated real time monitoring the integrity of buildings, as well as develop recommendations for assessing new types of threats relating to climate change.

There exists great potential for further cooperation, e.g. through the exchange of experts. Mr Soloviev stressed the importance of promoting the expertise accumulated within the Agreement at international events. Additionally, EMERCOM's presence could be expanded by including one of the educational institutions of EMERCOM into the network of centres. ECNTRM could contribute to the development of



documents which could serve as guidance tools for the Agreement. For example, it has prepared a *"Methodology for remote, automatic, real-time monitoring of buildings and structural engineering"*. There are proposals for a document on best practices and national best use cases of emergency planning for man-made disasters focusing on how to inform the public and involve them in decision-making, specifically taking into account special measures for people with disabilities.

The Executive Secretary thanked Mr Soloviev and welcomed his proposals to exchange experts and invite new scientific centres to work within the Agreement. This would contribute to sharing information, methodologies and knowledge. Mr Zyman looked forward to increasing direct contacts between the specialised centres. Projects should be developed in cooperation with other scientific centres in the network to ensure the greater transfer of knowledge, information and cooperation within the network. He expressed his appreciation of the Russian Federation's input in the different standards of the Agreement, and EMERCOM's active participation. He recalled participating in the Integrated Security and Safety Exhibition held in Moscow in May 2021 and applauded the efforts put into developing technologies and cooperation methodologies in disaster risk prevention and protection.

**Mr Octavian Bivol, Chief of the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction**

Mr Bivol thanked the hosts and the Agreement for organising the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction (EFDRR) and the EUR-OPA Ministerial meeting back-to-back. He also thanked the Council of Europe for the longstanding cooperation with UNDRR, its engagement on challenges resulting from major hazards and support in implementing the Sendai Framework for DRR in Europe. The Ministerial meeting occurs at a critical time with the increasing impact of climate change and disaster risk affecting every aspect of livelihoods. Mr Bivol outlined the devastating economic consequences of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic which is directly responsible for increasing poverty globally. This is compounded by climate-related events that have resulted in a loss of 3 trillion USD between 2000 and 2019. Mr Bivol stressed the importance of learning about evolving risk landscape and effects of disasters and adapting to it through implementation of the Sendai Framework for DRR. He emphasised the benefits of investing in DRR e.g., early warning systems and resilient infrastructure.

More lives are being saved due to investment in DRR, despite the increase in disasters. In addition, assessing and analysing risks at local, national and regional level, harmonising and standardising data, building on each other's expertise, experience and mechanisms were required. Cooperation must be strengthened as well as the capacities for transboundary risk governance in order to further reduce the impact of disasters. Europe's leadership on DRR internally and regionally is fundamental to building resilience, together with strong legal treaties and institutions. The EFDRR on 24-26 November presented a key moment to strengthen regional cooperation whilst framing regional engagements for the next decade through the EFDRR 2021-2030 Regional Roadmap.

Mr Zyman thanked Mr Bivol and looked forward to continued cooperation and maximising the capacity to work together. He equally looked forward to the exchanges to come from other countries during the forum.

The Executive Secretary introduced the Medium-Term Plan 2021-2025.

The EUR-OPA [Medium-Term Plan 2021-2025](#) is the key document for the Agreement which sets out EUR-OPA's goals. In a brief outline of the document's approaches to disasters, Mr Zyman reminded that the increased vulnerabilities of our societies to disaster is partially due to the lack of sufficient preparedness predominantly caused by inadequate consideration of disaster risk in socio-economic development and intrinsic dynamic of risks. There is a scientific consensus that climate change causes a rise in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, while changes to land use deforestation and urbanisation contribute to increasing the potential threat to people, property and environment.



Mr. Constantinou (Cyprus) had mentioned fires propagating rapidly through rural areas where urbanization, a rural exodus, non-maintenance of the clearing of land, abandonment of agricultural use of land have all led to increased likelihood, intensity and frequency of fires. In this context, international cooperation has proven to be an efficient tool to promote DRR worldwide by facilitating access to aid, with expertise developed to mitigate the effects of disasters and to speed up recovery.

The Medium-Term Plan is aligned with the priorities of the Sendai Framework. Building on the core values of the Council of Europe, the plan promotes a human rights based and community based approach, ensuring in particular that the most vulnerable groups are not left behind when disasters occur. This was demonstrated by the adoption of the two recommendations earlier today. Mr. Zyman thanked all who had contributed to the development of the Plan as it stands. It is a good document for the Executive Secretariat to work with and for the Agreement to be based upon over the next four years.

No objections were raised, therefore Mr Zyman proposed that the Ministers formally adopt the Medium-Term Plan for the next four years.

**Decision: The Medium-Term Plan 2021-2025 was adopted by consensus.**

#### **ADOPTION OF THE MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ([AP/CAT\(2021\)14](#))**

K. Zyman reminded the participants that the draft ministerial declaration had been widely distributed and invited the participants to comment further. He highlighted some of the main points of the ministerial declaration:

The draft declaration takes stock of the progress achieved by the Agreement and provides guidance for its future work. It emphasises the importance of EUR-OPA's contribution to implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 as an essential contribution towards achieving the UN sustainable development goals and the Paris Agreement on climate change adopted in 2015. It endorses the EFDRR Roadmap as an effective tool to prioritise the actions and to address the implementation of the Sendai Framework in Europe and Central Asia.

The draft declaration promotes DRR, including prevention, mitigation and preparedness for emergencies. It calls for strengthening collaboration with scientific communities and promotes nature based solutions and the ecosystem approach to mitigating the impact of climate change. Finally, it endorses the Medium-Term Plan 2021-2025 and instructs the CPC to act on it in developing specific actions through their work while adopting a cross-sectoral approach pulling together the expertise and accomplishments of its coordinated programmes. Mr Zyman invited participants to comment on the draft declaration.

No further comments were made or objections raised, therefore the Secretariat proposed the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration.

**Decision: The Ministerial Declaration was adopted by consensus.**

Mr Zyman thanked Minister Cabrita and the Portuguese government for their excellent preparation and hosting of the 14<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement.

### **Closing Speech by Minister Eduardo Cabrita, Portugal**

Minister Cabrita thanked all the Ministers and participants for their presence and contributions to the fruitful discussions. Having adopted the Medium-Term Plan, he encouraged the Ministers to see to its implementation in their States. The adopted recommendation on *"Enabling and protecting persons with disabilities before, during and after public health emergencies resulting from viral or other pathogenic pandemics"* reflects the work done over the last years relating to disaster preparedness and response. They contain guidelines that will serve to inspire future work. The recommendation is pertinent in all situations, however, judging by the time spent in the last two years on Covid-19 and the battle which still lies ahead, it is clear that vulnerable persons should not be left behind in difficult situations.

The second adopted recommendation is on *"Inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in public health emergencies resulting from viral or other pathogenic pandemics."* In April 2020 during the pandemic situation, Portugal decided to accord migrants without a residence status full provisional rights to access national health services, social security and access to public services. This was widely recognised by the UN and Council of Europe as a decision of major importance. 87% of persons vaccinated in Portugal included migrants without assessment of their legal status.

Finally, the adopted Ministerial Declaration will serve to highlight the importance of international cooperation, more so in emergency situations. He stressed the need to continue this valuable cooperation. Minister Cabrita ended his speech with an African proverb "If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together".

The Executive Secretary thanked all the participants, the colleagues in Strasbourg and the interpreters who had all contributed to the success of this Ministerial Meeting. EUR-OPA looked forward to implementing the adopted documents in the years to come.