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

*Building More Inclusive Societies through
Better Disaster Risk Management*

Ministerial Declaration

EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT (EUR-OPA)

14th Ministerial Meeting of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) – Building More Inclusive Societies through Better Disaster Risk Management Matosinhos, Portugal, 24 November 2021

Declaration

We, the Ministers and the Heads of Delegations participating at the fourteenth Ministerial Meeting of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) - Building More Inclusive Societies through Better Disaster Risk Management,

Recalling the Strategic Framework of the Council of Europe adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Hamburg on 21 May 2021 recalling that its member States are committed to the values which are the common heritage of their peoples and the true source of individual freedom, political liberty and the rule of law, principles which must form the basis of all genuine democracies;

Gathered today, on 24 November 2021 in Matosinhos, Portugal, within the framework of the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction;

Noting the increasing frequency and amplitude of natural and technological disasters and the impact on people, property, livelihoods, heritage and the environment;

Recognising that the increased vulnerability and exposure of societies to disaster is predominantly caused by inadequate consideration of disaster risks in socio-economic development and the intrinsic dynamic of risks;

Considering that despite the constantly improved awareness of hazards and response capacity to disasters, the reduction of vulnerabilities and exposure and improving knowledge of risk and preparedness of societies remain tasks that are difficult to achieve;

Considering that the Covid-19 pandemic, which constitutes, among other, a public health emergency, has had a devastating effect on individuals, families and communities across the world and forced governments to make fast, difficult and often controversial policy choices;

Recognising that since its establishment in 1987, the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement has reinforced co-operation among its Parties in the field of prevention, preparedness and response in the face of major natural and technological disasters;

Noting with satisfaction the continuous cooperation between the Agreement and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) in promoting safer societies through the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the joint organisation of the Global Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction in Cancun, Mexico in 2017, as well as the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction in Istanbul in 2017, in Rome in 2018 and in Matosinhos, Portugal in 2021;

Taking note of the importance of Disaster Risk Reduction in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change adopted in 2015;

Taking note of the leading role played by the World Health Organisation in co-ordination of international efforts in application of International Health Regulations;

Noting with interest the pertinent work carried out within the Network of the Specialised Scientific Centres, both at national and regional levels, which aim to improve the awareness of and resilience to major risks within the population

Recognising that sharing of best practices within the Network of Specialised Scientific Centres offers a wealth of expertise on public health emergencies and can offer valuable guidance on sustainable responses to protect public health and mitigate the social consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic;

We, the Ministers and the Heads of Delegations:

Warmly thank the government of Portugal for the excellent preparation and hosting of the 14th Ministerial Session of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA).

Highly praise the continuous cooperation between the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) in promoting safer societies through the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

Emphasize the importance of the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 as essential contribution towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change adopted in 2015.

Endorse the European Forum on Disaster Risk Reduction Road Map as an effective tool to prioritize the actions in addressing the Sendai Implementation in Europe and Central Asia.

Take note with interest of the implementation of the Medium Term Plan 2016-20 adopted at the last Ministerial Session held in Lisbon in October 2016 and express their satisfaction for the way in which it has been steered by the Committee of Permanent Correspondents, supported as appropriate by the Executive Secretariat of the EUR-OPA Agreement.

We, the Ministers and the Heads of Delegations, resolve to:

Continue promoting disaster risk reduction – including prevention, mitigation, preparedness and efficient response to emergencies with the aim to foster resilience of societies – at all levels of government, in close collaboration with all other pertinent public and private stakeholders, academia and civil society.

Foster a multidisciplinary, cross-sectoral and participatory approach to better efficiency and effectiveness of disaster risk governance at central, regional and local level.

Strengthen the collaboration with the scientific communities and academia to ensure sound strategies and action plans for disaster risk prevention, mitigation and preparedness.

Promote nature-based solutions and the ecosystem approach to mitigate the impact of climate change and related natural disasters.

Adopt the Medium Term Plan 2021-2025 (document AP/CAT (2021)11) of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) as guidelines for priority action in this field over the next five years.

Instruct the Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the Agreement to follow the implementation of the Medium Term Plan, adapting it as required to new circumstances and making proposals and recommendations to improve its effectiveness.

Instruct the network of Specialised Centres of the Agreement to support, in their respective spheres of competence, the implementation of the priorities set in the Medium Term Plan, working in a cross-sectoral manner, pooling their expertise in the accomplishment of sound, coordinated programmes.

Invite States which are not part of the Partial Agreement to join this co-operation structure so as to increase the synergies allowing to achieve more resilient societies.

Furthermore, we, the Ministers and the Heads of Delegations, request

the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to support as appropriate the implementation of the Medium Term Plan 2021-2025 of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) and to encourage the member States of the Council of Europe, which are not party to the Partial Agreement, to consider joining this intergovernmental co-operation framework.