



Parliamentary Conference **Elections in times of crisis**
Conférence parlementaire **Les élections en temps de crise**
Parlamentarische Konferenz **Wahlen in Krisenzeiten**
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SESSION 2: Universal suffrage amid universal suffering – how natural disasters distort elections

Natural disasters, just like the COVID-19 pandemic, can disrupt a country's political stability and undermine the democratic principles that elections are designed to uphold. To guarantee the proper functioning of democratic institutions, national authorities, including election management bodies, need to be prepared and have a risk prevention and management plans ready for such occasions.

In this regard, what preventive strategies can be adopted to protect elections from natural disasters? Two strategies are to be implemented: risk management prior to the disaster and crisis management once it has occurred.

Proactive disaster risk management, including risk assessments and vulnerability analyses, can help minimise disruptions to the electoral process and maintain the integrity of elections even in the face of natural disasters. What strategies can be employed to manage these risks effectively? What are the best practice examples?

Preparedness to crisis management is crucial. What legal and logistical measures must be put in place immediately after a natural disaster? What criteria need to be considered on deciding on the capacity of a devastated state or region to restore critical infrastructure before Election Day, the use of alternative voting methods or postponing the elections? How to adapt to the needs of internally displaced persons or to adjusting the proportional size of electoral districts?

What are the potential impacts of natural disasters on the campaign, accuracy and validity of election results, and what steps can be taken to mitigate these impacts? What measures are needed to maintain high levels of participation and public trust in the integrity of elections.

It is equally important for election officials to be trained in disaster preparedness and response, and for the states to have contingency plans in place to ensure the electoral process can continue in times of crisis.

What role can the international community play in supporting election authorities in areas affected by natural disasters, considering that assistance should not only address the immediate, medium- and longer-term needs but, above all, be based on human rights.

Given the recent earthquakes in Türkiye, these questions are more relevant than ever. The session will look more in-depth into the Turkish case as an example of the challenges of staging elections in the aftermath of a natural disaster.