



**Statement on behalf of the European Community**  
**World Conference on Disaster Reduction**  
**Special session on the Indian Ocean Disaster**  
**Kobe, 20 January 2005**

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This special session provides us with an opportunity to confirm to the countries affected by the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster that the European Community continues to be mobilised and is developing the different elements of the European Union response to their needs. The day after the Jakarta meeting, the European Commission received a mandate from the EU Council of Ministers to present a series of proposals in order to transform our pledge into commitments. We are committed to do this as quickly as possible.

We are currently preparing the different aspects of these proposals regarding the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase. In parallel ongoing humanitarian relief programmes which include those in the area of health, water and sanitation in the countries affected, will continue for several months to come. We are also looking at other instruments in order to mobilise short-term funding, such as technical assistance in the preparation of the national reconstruction plans, which will act as a bridge between the initial emergency/humanitarian effort provided through our humanitarian aid department (ECHO) and the large scale reconstruction phase.

With respect to our pledge of 350 million euro in the context of the rehabilitation and reconstruction aid, we consider it important to mobilise the funds as soon as the needs assessments conducted by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank are available. We understand that they will soon be finalised.

In addition to the elements mentioned by the Luxembourg Minister speaking on behalf of the European Union, I would like to touch on a few of the further measures considered in the context of European Community instruments.

In Jakarta, the President of the European Commission, Mr. Jose Barroso announced that he will be proposing that the European Investment Bank manage a dedicated long term lending facility on favourable terms to assist the financing of the reconstruction effort. On the 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2005, the EU Ministers of Finance welcomed this initiative for an Indian Ocean Tsunami Lending Facility of up to 1 billion euro, which will be managed by the European Investment Bank. Discussions are ongoing between the European Commission and the European Investment Bank to finalise the details of this initiative.

We are also looking at measures in the trade sector, compatible with WTO obligations, to support the affected countries by improving their access to the EU market. Different measures are being considered, including a fast-track adoption of the new GSP scheme.

Moreover it is becoming more and more apparent that the second hardest hit economic sector after tourism following the Indian Ocean disaster is the fishing sector, in particular small-scale coastal fisheries and aquaculture. We have approached the FAO to urge them to take the lead in the preparation of a needs assessment with respect to the rehabilitation of the fisheries sector and the coordination of any relevant international aid effort.

Our intention is to work closely with the countries affected to ensure that our aid in the context of rehabilitation and reconstruction is part of their coordinated national and/or regional programmes.

Within the disaster preparedness programmes of our humanitarian aid department, measures to support the development disaster management capabilities by the countries

concerned, whether at the level of planning, coordination or mobilisation structure of their resources, are being developed. This includes the establishment of a global disaster alert system with UN OCHA, for which a prototype will be available in March 2005. Furthermore, 2 million euro in response to the call on an early warning system contained in the UN Flash Appeal is to be shortly committed. This represents 30% of requested funds.

We are also considering a series of measures in the field of early warning systems, satellite monitoring and research and development. Several specific research activities addressing improved early warning and evaluation systems and identification of tsunami prone areas and underlying factors will be considered. These activities will be coordinated in close cooperation with European and non-European research institutions, international organisations and academia. It is also our intention that EU research programmes will ensure continued and adequate support in the field of natural hazards in all their aspects. A key activity for the EU is to implement the GEOSS plan of action in particular with respect to early warning strategies.

In the spirit of compassion and solidarity of the European peoples with the victims of the Indian Ocean disaster, we will support the early warning strategy developed during this conference in a substantial and effective way. It is of crucial importance that any initiative build on existing activities, are complementary, people-centred and comprehensive.

The United Nations will have our full support in taking the lead in this process. More than ever, the international community has a special responsibility to assure a safer future, and in so doing should develop an effective disaster risk reduction strategy.