

DECLARATION OF MADRID

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN FORUM ON DISASTER REDUCTION (Madrid, 6-8 October 2003)



The Official Delegations to the Regional Conference on Disaster Reduction and the participants in the other events of the Euro-Mediterranean Forum on Disaster Reduction,

CONSIDERING :

The conclusions and recommendations contained in the Declaration of Valencia (May 1999), which identify important goals and objectives for the cooperation on disaster reduction in the Euro-Mediterranean area;

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 57/256 (December 2002) on the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction affirming the need to increase international collaboration to reduce the impact of natural and related technological and environmental disasters, and endorsing the review of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action;

The conclusions of the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg and in particular its plan of implementation recognizing disaster reduction as a central component of sustainable development;

The growing collaboration between the Council of Europe, the European Commission and the United Nations in the area of disaster prevention and reduction and in particular the encouraging provisions made in this sense under the Sixth Framework Programme of the European Commission as well as the studies and research programmes run by the Commission through its General Directorate for Research as well as the Joint Research Centre of Ispra;

The proceedings and conclusions of the Meeting of national platforms for disaster reduction of the European Union held in Bonn in January 2003;

The resolutions and recommendations adopted at the 9th Ministerial session of EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement of the Council of Europe (Bandol, October 2002), in particular the Resolution

on Euro-Mediterranean Synergy as well as the Recommendation concerning the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, in which the Ministers recommended that:

- “National disaster reduction platforms linked to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction in the Euro-Mediterranean region be established, consolidated and developed through recognition and support by national governments;
- “A Euro-Mediterranean Conference on disaster reduction should be organized jointly by the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement of the Council of Europe and the ISDR Secretariat in 2003 or early 2004, hosted by the government of Spain at the National School of Civil Protection in Madrid.”

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS:

Societies in the Euro-Mediterranean region are increasingly vulnerable to natural and other related technological and environmental hazards, whose impact is made more acute by the consequences of demographic, economic and social changes including political tensions, urbanization and developing processes.

Disaster reduction is one central element of sustainable development and the associated integrated disaster risk management is a primary responsibility of governments. Such risk management should be based on a holistic approach to risk prevention and reduction combining scientific knowledge, vulnerability assessment and the competencies of disaster managers. The civil society, the private sector, including insurance companies, experts and academia must be fully involved.

In pursuit of these goals it is essential that risk management and vulnerability reduction be integrated into planning, education and training, land use planning and management by each country in the region, taking full account of transboundary aspects and in cooperation with the relevant international and regional organizations.

Risk evaluation and vulnerability assessment are the essential basis for sound national policy and regional cooperation measures. In view of the particular characteristics of the region, technical co-operation between countries of the region is a major tool together with the involvement of citizens, local and regional entities within each country, as well as European and international institutions to support and complement the action of national governments.

Communications are vital not only when disasters strike but to disseminate information to the proper recipients in the prevention phase. New information and communication technology should be put to contribution to establish interactive information systems that are affordable for all countries in the region and useful for both prevention and emergency management, using standardized definitions and glossaries.

It is of strategic importance that risk prevention be considered a component of land use policy, especially with regard to highly populated areas and large cities. To achieve and reinforce this it is necessary to engage in a progressive large-scale effort to generate a culture of disaster prevention in Europe and the Mediterranean through education and information campaigns and programmes.

It is also important that the economic and industrial sector takes initiatives to develop communication and information measures for the benefit of the population taking into account, in the services they provide, risk prevention concerns.

Countries of Europe and the Mediterranean collectively possess a wealth of scientific knowledge and technological innovations, including earth observation and satellite-based applications, that can be harnessed and used to monitor risk, assess vulnerability and reduce the impact of natural and related technological and environmental disasters.

IN VIEW OF THE ABOVE:

It is proposed to launch a Euro-Med programme on “Citizens Education” based on:

- Risk education curricula in schools;
- Specific risk prevention awareness linked with safety plans for school infrastructures.

This programme would operate in the framework of an agreement between interested countries under the joint umbrella of the Council of Europe EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement, the European Union and ISDR, each country defining its own experimental network of schools participating under the coordination of a “national observatory of risk prevention”.

It is also proposed to organize a seminar under the auspices the United Nations (ISDR, UN-HABITAT, OCHA, UN/ECE), the European Commission and the Council of Europe EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement on the topic of land use policy and risk prevention focusing on floods, forest fires and industrial risks, to be held in the first half of 2004 and before the Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction (January 2005).

The proposal is welcome to initiate a Euro-Med Master on “local and regional authorities and risk management” in Sergy Pontoise, France, noting that a seminar on this topic will take place in Paris on 12-18 November 2003.

It is equally welcome that a meeting be organized in 2004 on the role of the economic and industrial sector in risk prevention, with the participation of the private sector, the civil society and European and international organizations to discuss and define proposals for future actions and projects.

Concerning the legal aspects of disaster management and risk reduction, participants welcome the comparative study undertaken by the Centre of Florival (Belgium) in the framework of the Council of Europe EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement and propose that similar studies be carried out to have a complete picture for the entire Euro-Mediterranean region.

REQUEST

The Secretariat of the Council of Europe EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement and the Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction to bring the present Declaration to the attention of the international institutions concerned and the international community at large, and requests the Secretariat for ISDR to take into account the discussions and conclusions of the Euro-Mediterranean Forum on Disaster Reduction in its ongoing work to review of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action.

EXPRESS THANKS

To the Spanish authorities, in particular the Ministry of Interior, Directorate-General for Civil Protection, for the excellent organization of the Euro-Mediterranean Forum at the National School of Civil Protection in Madrid and for their warm hospitality.

Done in Madrid, 8 October 2003,
World Day for Disaster Reduction