



COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION



Council Conclusions on Reinforcing the Union's Disaster Response Capacity – towards an integrated approach to managing disasters

*2878th GENERAL AFFAIRS Council meeting
Luxembourg, 16 June 2008*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

1. WELCOMES the submission of the Commission Communication on Reinforcing the Union's Disaster Response Capacity¹, and INVITES the Commission to present proposals, no later than October 2008, regarding disaster prevention within the EU and an EU strategy for disaster risk reduction in developing countries,
2. WELCOMES the integrated approach to disaster management announced by the Commission which covers the full disaster cycle encompassing disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery, natural and man-made disasters occurring in the EU or in third countries, including complex emergencies, and the use of the whole range of relevant instruments of the European Union as appropriate to each specific situation,
3. CONSIDERS that the enhancement of disaster prevention and preparedness and the reinforcement of the Union's disaster response capacity is an important priority objective for the Union and that coherence and coordination between different policy areas and institutions at local, national, regional and EU level will lead to a more effective, integrated and visible EU disaster management,

¹ 7562/08 - COM(2008) 130 final.

P R E S S

4. UNDERLINES that the establishment in 2007 of an improved civil protection legal framework, which includes the Civil Protection Financial Instrument² and the Community Civil Protection Mechanism³, and the joint statement in 2007 on the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid⁴ form the basis for future work in this field and towards this priority objective,
5. EMPHASISES that reinforcement of the Union's disaster response capacity should be achieved through a balanced approach guided by two principles: *national responsibility*, whereby each Member State takes appropriate preventive and operational measures for the protection and safety of people, the environment and property, and *EU solidarity*, which is the basis for the provision of assistance rendered on request to Member States and third countries and their people, when affected by a disaster that exceeds their response capacity,
6. RECOGNISES that special attention should be given at Member State and EU level to strengthening disaster prevention and preparedness in order to contribute to reduction of the number and consequences of disasters, and CALLS UPON Member States and third countries participating in the Mechanism to make better use of the provisions of the existing civil protection instruments in order to step up efforts at national level regarding the prevention of and preparedness for disasters, and CALLS UPON the Commission to promote the use of existing regional and structural financial instruments for disaster prevention and preparedness,
7. Whilst REAFFIRMING that the consular authorities of the Member States may request support through the Civil Protection Mechanism, POINTS OUT that consular protection of EU citizens in third countries lies within the competence of Member States, which may cooperate in case of emergency according to the principles and within the framework of the Lead State concept, adopted by the Council in June 2007⁵,
8. REITERATES that the EU humanitarian aid and civil protection assistance provided to third countries should always be needs-based and in accordance with fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, in line with the MCDA⁶ and Oslo guidelines⁷ and consistent with existing international response mechanisms, with the United Nations, and in particular UN OCHA, in the central and overall coordinating role when it is present,
9. WELCOMES the Commission's intention to present, in close consultation with relevant stakeholders, an action plan with practical measures for the implementation of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid by the Commission and the Member States as an important contribution to efficient, well-coordinated and reinforced European humanitarian aid,

² Council Decision 2007/162/EC, Euratom of 5 March 2007 establishing a Civil Protection Financial Instrument (OJ L 71, 10.3.2007, p. 9).

³ Council Decision 2007/779/EC, Euratom of 8 November 2007 establishing a Community Civil Protection Mechanism (recast) (OJ L 314, 1.12.2007, p. 9).

⁴ OJ C 25, 30.1.2008, p. 1.

⁵ 10671/07.

⁶ Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies - "MCDA Guidelines" (March 2003).

⁷ Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief - "Oslo Guidelines" (Revision 1.1, November 2007).

10. RECALLS the conclusions of the European Council of June 2005⁸ calling for the establishment of a civil protection rapid response capability, based on the Member States' resources, and those of December 2007⁹ inviting the Council and the Commission to make the best use of the Decision establishing a Community Civil Protection Mechanism (recast) and the Civil Protection Financial Instrument,
11. WELCOMES the Commission's intention to develop a knowledge base comprising an overview of the competent structures, major disasters scenarios taking into account prevention and preparedness measures, the resulting implications for resources, their availability, potential gaps in disaster response resources in the area of European civil protection taking into account lessons learnt, the links with the planned mapping of logistical capacity in the area of international humanitarian aid, and the impacts of options for filling any identified potential gaps, and INVITES the Commission fully to involve the Member States in this process,
12. RECALLS the Council Conclusions of June 2007¹⁰ on enhancing the coordination capacity of the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) within the Community Civil Protection Mechanism; EMPHASISES the importance and urgency of reinforcing the MIC with the necessary human and material resources with a view to enhancing its monitoring and analytical capacity, and developing its advisory role to Member States, so as to support effectively the interventions launched by the Member States, in accordance with the scope of the Mechanism,
13. RECALLS the Council Conclusions of December 2007¹¹ on the development and establishment of Early Warning Systems in the EU and the Council Conclusions of December 2007¹² on the establishment of an Early Warning System for tsunamis in the North East Atlantic and the Mediterranean region, and REAFFIRMS the need for the Member States and the European Commission to take forward initiatives to improve early warning systems and alert signals for disasters and to fill the existing gap in the Early Warning System for tsunamis in the North East Atlantic and the Mediterranean region,
14. RECOGNISES that Member States provide civil protection resources on a voluntary basis for the European interventions in the framework of the Community Civil Protection Mechanism; CONSIDERS that options should be explored to further improve the availability, use and coordination of national civil protection capacities to meet identified needs in order to ensure that the EU disaster response is adequate and effective, taking into account the work to be carried out by the Commission and the Member States pursuant to paragraph 11.
15. URGES the Commission to assess a wide range of options for establishing and coordinating a sustainable European Disaster Management Training Network, covering all phases of disaster management, and to present proposals for such a network as soon as possible,

⁸ 10255/1/05 REV 1.

⁹ 16616/1/07 REV 1.

¹⁰ 10014/07.

¹¹ 15473/07.

¹² 15479/07.

16. RECOGNISES the need for improved horizontal coordination between the Council, the Commission and the Member States regarding disaster management at all levels, CALLS UPON all parties involved to work towards this objective, and INVITES the Presidency and the Commission to take this work forward."
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