



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 18 April 2008

8592/08

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COSDP 309
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NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Delegations

Subject: Draft Council Conclusions on Reinforcing the Union's Disaster Response Capacity - towards an integrated approach to managing disasters

Delegations will find, in ANNEX, draft Council Conclusions on Reinforcing the Union's Disaster Response Capacity - towards an integrated approach to managing disasters, submitted by the Presidency.

DRAFT

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON

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

(submitted by the Presidency)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

1. WELCOMES the Commission Communication on Reinforcing the Union's Disaster Response Capacity,
2. CONSIDERS that the reinforcement of the Union's disaster response capacity is a high-priority policy objective for the Union and that all means should be mobilised to achieve this objective,
3. WELCOMES the overall objective of greater coherence, effectiveness and visibility of the EU disaster response,
4. UNDERLINES that the adoption by the Council in 2007 of a new legal framework for the Community Civil Protection Mechanism and the adoption in 2007 by the European Institutions of the Humanitarian Consensus are first steps towards this objective,
5. WELCOMES the integrated approach announced by the Commission which covers the full disaster cycle from prevention to 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 required by each specific situation, and REITERATES that synergies between EU instruments and different policy areas are of essential importance,

6. EMPHASISES that the reinforcement of the Union's disaster response capacity should be achieved through a balanced approach guided by two principles: *national responsibility*, whereby each state takes appropriate operational and preventive measures for the protection and safety of its citizens, and *EU solidarity*, which guarantees that Member States and third countries at risk receive European assistance,
7. NOTES the progress already made and STRESSES that further work in the areas covered in the Commission Communication is needed,
8. RECOGNIZES the need for improved coordination between the Council, the Commission and the Member States regarding disaster response, CALLS UPON all parties involved to work towards this objective, and INVITES the Presidency and the Commission to further develop existing arrangements to take this work forward,
9. NOTES the Commission intention to contribute to inter-institutional coordination efforts in disasters outside the EU through the Commission's "Crisis Platform", for political coordination with Member States at HQ level, and its specialized network of Delegations for local information sharing and further promotion of the EU response coordination at field level,
10. ACKNOWLEDGES the importance of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid and WELCOMES the Commission's intention to present an action plan for practical measures to implement the Consensus in close consultation with other relevant stakeholders,
11. INVITES the Commission to include in the action plan for the implementation of the Consensus the following measures for reinforcement of European humanitarian aid: a mapping study on logistical capacity, a comprehensive capacity building programme to continue development of standby capacities of key humanitarian actors, and measures for strengthening local capacities in disaster prone third countries and better operational coordination of EU humanitarian aid,

12. REITERATES that the EU humanitarian aid and civil protection assistance provided to third countries must be in accordance with basic humanitarian principles and should be firmly anchored in the existing international response mechanism with UN OCHA in the central coordinating role when it is present,
13. EMPHASISES that reinforcing the EU's capacity to deal with disasters requires an approach encompassing disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery at national, European, and international levels,
14. RECALLS the conclusions of the European Council of June 2005 calling for the establishment of a civil protection rapid response capability and those of December 2007 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, which present the two basic legal instruments for civil protection at EU level,
15. RECALLS the Council Conclusions of June 2007 on enhancing the coordination capacity of the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) within the Community Civil Protection Mechanism; EMPHASISES the urgency of transforming the MIC into a genuine operational centre for European civil protection operations disposing of the necessary human and material resources for actively supporting the operations launched by the Member States in the framework of the Mechanism,
16. RECALLS the Council conclusions of December 2007 on the development and establishment of Early Warning Systems in the EU and the Council Conclusions of December 2007 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 Union to take forward initiatives to improve early warning systems and alert signals for disasters and to fill the existing gap in Early Warning System for tsunamis in the North East Atlantic and the Mediterranean region,

17. RECOGNISES that Member States cannot be expected in all cases to provide civil protection resources for European interventions in the framework of the Community Civil Protection Mechanism either because of simultaneous national emergencies requiring the use of the available national resources or because funding is unavailable at national level, and therefore CONSIDERS that options should be explored to ensure the availability of key resources at all times, inter alia by elaborating appropriate voluntary arrangements between Member States and the Commission for keeping certain types of resources on standby or arrangements for providing complementary civil protection resources for European civil protection interventions within the EU or in third countries,
18. INVITES the Commission to take urgent action to reinforce the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) with a view to enhancing its analytical capacity, develop its advisory role to Member States, and ensuring its effective operational functioning,
19. INVITES the Commission to develop a knowledge base covering major disasters scenarios, an overview of the competent structures, requirements for resources, their availability, gaps in disaster response resources in the area of European civil protection taking into account the links with the mapping of logistical capacity underway in the area of international humanitarian aid, and the impacts of options to fill any identified gaps, and INVITES the Commission fully to involve the experts of the Member States in this process,
20. REQUESTS the Commission to present proposals urgently, no later than the end of 2008, regarding disaster prevention within the EU and an EU strategy for disaster risk reduction in developing countries,
21. CALLS UPON EU Member States and third countries participating in the Mechanism to participate actively in exchanges of experience and to step-up efforts at national level regarding the prevention of and preparedness for disasters,

22. URGES the Commission to assess a wide range of options for setting up a sustainable European structure with responsibility for establishing and coordinating the European Disaster Response Training Network, and to present proposals for such a structure as soon as possible.
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