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From : Presidency

To : Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

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Subject : Reinforcing the European Union's capacities to prevent and respond to disasters

1. Delegations will find attached a Presidency Report on Reinforcing the European Union's capacities to prevent and respond to disasters, including a Roadmap on future action. The Presidency submits this Report in line with its Note dated 22 July 2008¹.

2. COREPER is asked to take note of the Report with a view to forwarding it to the JHA Council so that it takes note of the Report and to the General Affairs Council for endorsement.

¹ 11753/08.

Introduction

1. At its June 2006 meeting, and in view of the efforts made in implementing the Action Plan following the tsunami in Asia in December 2004, the European Council stressed that improving the EU's responsiveness to emergencies remained a political imperative. This need has become even more apparent recently in view of an important increase in frequency as well as extent in major emergencies, often linked to climate change. At the same time, threats such as major CBRN² terrorist attacks continue to be a concern.
2. Since then, significant progress was made, including the adoption of Community's Civil Protection Mechanism (Recast) and the Civil Protection Financial Instrument, as well as the Joint Statement by the Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission on the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.
3. In June 2008, the Council adopted conclusions highlighting the requirement for an integrated approach to disaster management, encompassing 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 EU instruments. The European Council also stressed the need for a coordinated approach, inviting the Commission and the Member States to take this work forward rapidly.
4. Following on from these conclusions, the Presidency has sought to advance work with a view to improving horizontal coordination between the Council, the Commission and the Member States at all levels, in line with the note it presented on 22 July 2008³. The present note summarises the progress achieved in the past six months and points to areas where foreseeable steps could be accomplished in the next year (annexed roadmap).

² Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear.

³ 11753/08.

Prevention

5. Prevention is the first key element for an integrated approach to a comprehensive emergency response, and shall be considered as a priority for the forthcoming months. This requires that the different policies, instruments and services available to the Community and the Member States be brought together, whilst balancing national responsibility and European solidarity. The Commission is invited to submit its communication on prevention as soon as possible early next year.

6. As the global impact of disasters requires the same attention when they threaten third countries, and especially the developing countries which are most vulnerable to disasters, the Commission will also present in parallel a communication on an EU Strategy for disaster risk reduction in developing countries.

Civil Protection

European Mutual Assistance

7. Following the entry into force of the Civil Protection Mechanism Decision, significant progress has been made, in particular as regards the creation and registration of Member States civil protection modules, covering all module categories except fire fighting with helicopters and emergency shelters. Further registrations are under consideration, including multinational modules. The Commission has started work on specific training and exercises to enhance the preparedness and the interoperability of modules.

8. [On 27 November 2008] the Council invited Member States to promote the availability of their modules and other resources in order to further improve European Mutual Assistance and thus better anticipate potential disasters and enable a rapid and effective EU response. Member States are also invited to identify experts to reinforce the MIC during major emergencies and, together with the Commission, to further accelerate the deployment of EU assessment and coordination teams and improve the interoperability of modules and other resources. The Commission is invited to reinforce the MIC with a view to preparing and supporting these objectives, including through continuing development of scenarios and risk analysis.

European Disaster Management Training Arrangements

9. Experience has shown that the effectiveness of European civil protection interventions is largely determined by the training received by the intervention teams. The training system, developed since 2004 by the Commission within the Civil Protection Mechanism, has been the basis for developing a common European approach on intervention preparedness and response.
10. [On 27 November 2008] the Council called for the setting up of European Disaster Management Training Arrangements covering all aspects of disaster management with two strands of work: promoting the consistency amongst national training programmes in support of disaster management, and offering a wide range of training opportunities at Community level for disaster management experts and intervention personnel, primarily by diversifying and reinforcing the existing Mechanism training programme.

Early Warning Systems

11. Building on previous work, the Presidency has organized a seminar the objective of which was to strengthen cooperation in order to set up early warning systems for tsunamis as well as marine and coastal floods. Tangible progress has been made since 2007 in particular on the calculation model for tsunamis established by the Joint Research Centre, which enables to reduce alert times.

Preliminary findings highlight the need for closer collaboration between the forecasting community and civil protection community in the preparedness as well as crisis phase, as well as the sharing of national early warning systems with the MIC, in order to enable better preparedness and a more rapid response, based on a multi-hazard approach.

Further strengthened cooperation and coordination with United Nations

12. Clear rules for efficient coordination and cooperation for interventions in third countries carried out through the MIC have been specified in the Community Civil Protection Mechanism (Recast), in full respect of UN-OCHA's overall coordination role when it is present. Good progress has been made recently in this area, and in particular as regards the cooperation between EU coordination and assessment teams and the UN-OCHA teams deployed on the ground.
13. [On 27 November 2008] the Council invited the Commission to enhance its cooperation with the United Nations by measures leading to increased synergy of action through, inter alia, mutual knowledge of practice and developing the coordination of relevant EU and UN training activities.

Humanitarian Aid

14. On 22 July 2008 the Council endorsed the Action Plan setting out practical steps by EU donors to implement the European Consensus commitments, a comprehensive framework for improving delivery of humanitarian aid at EU level. The bulk of actions foreseen in the Action Plan should be underway by 2009 and are to be pursued by the Commission and the Member States acting together.

15. The Council is committed to ensuring a regular review of progress on implementation and discuss priorities, in particular in the newly established Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (as from 1 January 2009). The latter will actively engage in the debates on strengthening the EU's disaster response capacity and disaster risk reduction in developing countries.

Promotion of consular assistance

16. Following exercises in Cairo, Paris and Mexico, work has progressed on the Lead State concept for crisis situations, clarifying the operational mechanisms of the Lead State as well as the different areas of responsibility, including the possibility for the Lead State to request support from other Member States, through mechanisms such as the Community Civil Protection Mechanism and the crisis management structures of the General Secretariat of the Council. The "Consular Affairs" Working Party has also established a European network for consular training whose first module dealt with consular crisis management.

Military support to EU disaster relief

17. The provision as a last resort of military support, other than transport, was considered twice in the last six months.

The arrangements on "Military support to EU disaster relief and coordination of available assets and capabilities" were triggered for the first time in operational conditions when the Commission requested the EUMS to look for possibilities of urgent delivery of temporary bridges through the MIC to answer a request from Haiti. Those arrangements worked well, but a more effective solution was finally identified locally.

In the 2008 exercise testing the EU Emergency and Crisis Coordination Arrangements, CCAEX08, (see next paragraph), which also included a consular crisis in a third country, the relevant procedures were tested again, including with ECHO and the MIC in their respective areas of competence.

EU Emergency and Crisis Coordination Arrangements (CCA)

18. The EU Emergency and Crisis Coordination Arrangements exercise (CCAEX08), involving 9 directly affected Member States, focused on the required political coordination at EU level in the context of a major climatic disaster, a twin-storm, whose significant damage affected several sectors of concern. Several national exercises were run simultaneously, enabling to test the link between national and EU disaster management arrangements.
19. Positive achievements in the technical implementation of the procedures could be reached. A "Situation Map" was created and tested for the first time, to be refined, which aim is to recapitulate relevant EU mechanisms as regard the chosen scenario and propose possible political responses which may be urgently required at EU level. The elaboration of such "SitMaps" could be further explored for the most probable or relevant CCA scenarios. The articulation between the different groups of actors called upon to provide expertise, insight and guidance in a CCA context will need to be explored in more depth.

The challenge from chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats and risks (CBRN)

20. The Commission has set up, in early 2008, a CBRN Task Force with the aim to help to develop a policy on CBRN and to submit to the Council a package of proposals on CBRN in June 2009, including action plans on bio-preparedness, radiological and nuclear risk reduction and the chemical threat.
21. A police seminar on CBRN threats was held in Paris in October 2008, which highlighted the tangible risk and challenge that these threats pose to the EU and proposed to ensure closer cooperation and exchange of information including through Europol tools.

22. A full-scale exercise was organised in the South of France in November, including Civil protection and police units, on consequences management of a terrorist attack, in order to test the capabilities of CBRN civil protection modules and decontamination chains from different Member States to work together in that context, and coordination between civil protection and police forces in such a scenario. This exercise highlighted the importance of such modules, decontamination chains, the critical importance of hospital capacities and the essential role of the chain of command for such events.

Protection of Critical Infrastructures (EPCIP)

23. In June 2008, the Council reached political agreement on the Directive on the Identification and Designation of European Critical Infrastructure and Assessment of the Need to Improve their Protection, with regard to two priority sectors: transport and energy. It is accompanied by non-Binding Guidelines agreed between the Commission and the Member States addressing the process of identification of Critical Infrastructure. Formal adoption of the Directive is foreseen before the end of the year. In October 2008, the Commission also submitted a proposal for a Council Decision on a Critical Infrastructure Warning Information Network (CIWIN), which will provide a secure cross-sectoral communication tool to exchange information on a voluntary basis in the framework of the Directive.

24. On overview of the work for 2009, detailed in the report, will be found in the roadmap annexed herewith as annex I.
25. The Council will be informed about progress achieved by December 2009.

ROADMAP

1. PREVENTION

a) Commission communication on disaster prevention in the EU would focus on an integrated approach in order to link preparedness, prevention and response with the aim to develop common approaches to identified risks.

- the Commission to submit a communication as soon as possible early 2009;

- corresponding conclusions to be adopted by the Council.

b) Commission communication on an EU Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction in Developing Countries would focus mainly on development cooperation, but may also touch upon humanitarian aid and will, inter alia, propose to scale up support for disaster preparedness capacities in third countries facing high level of risks.

- the Commission to submit a communication as soon as possible and early 2009.

- corresponding conclusions to be adopted by the Council.

2. CIVIL PROTECTION

a) European Mutual Assistance

Council conclusions calling for civil protection capabilities to be enhanced by a European Mutual Assistance system building on the civil protection modular approach, adopted [on 27 November 2008], aim at further strengthening European Mutual Assistance, based on an improved cooperation within the Community Civil Protection Mechanism and a strengthening of the MIC.

- Member States to develop and/or identify civil protection modules on a voluntary basis and to register them as soon as possible, paying particular attention to those types of modules that are not yet or only partially covered;
- Member States, supported by the Commission, to work for interoperability of modules;
- Member States and the Commission to work for faster deployment of assessment and coordination experts;
- the Commission to reinforce the MIC, with a view to providing the necessary advice on the identification and registration of modules; studying the mapping of national civil protection modules; studying disaster scenarios and undertaking risk assessment and assisting Member States through the organisation of simulation exercises;
- the Commission to report to Council on the progress made in implementing these measures before the end of 2009.

b) European Disaster Management Training Arrangements

[On 27 November 2008] the Council has also adopted conclusions which call for the setting up of European Disaster Management Training Arrangements. These aim at the development of two strands of activities: to promote the consistency amongst national training programmes in support of disaster management, on the one hand, and to ensure a wider range of training opportunities at Community level for disaster management experts and intervention personnel, on the other.

- the Commission to take initial steps to prepare for the setting up of the European Disaster Management Training Arrangements;
- the Commission to provide suitable administrative support;

- the Commission to submit appropriate proposals for the Arrangements at the earliest opportunity and at the latest by the end of 2009.

c) Early Warning Systems

- practical work at expert level to continue, based on the work carried out under PT and FR Presidencies.

d) Further strengthened cooperation and coordination with United Nations

Council conclusions adopted [on 27 November 2008] invite the Commission to enhance its cooperation with the UN as regards exchange of information, exchange of experts, training programmes, and cooperation with MIC.

- the Commission to evaluate and report on the measures mentioned no later than by the end of 2009, and to submit proposals where appropriate.

3. HUMANITARIAN AID

The Commission's Action Plan for the implementation of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid has been endorsed by the Council and the implementation has begun.

- Working Party (as from 1 January 2009 the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid) to ensure follow-up to the Action Plan for the implementation of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, and examine aid effectiveness.

4. PROMOTION OF CONSULAR ASSISTANCE

Progress has been achieved on the Lead State concept for crisis situations and a European network for consular training.

- the Commission to continue to implement its 2007-2009 Action Plan ("Effective consular protection in third countries: the contribution of the European Union");
- the Czech Presidency to organize/host a meeting of the crisis units' directors on consular crisis management and welcome eventual organisation of an exercise in order to pursue the experimentation of the lead state concept on the ground;
- the Czech Presidency to organize, together with the General Secretariat of the Council and the European Commission the second module on consular training, where one part would be dedicated to the crisis management.

5. EU EMERGENCY AND CRISIS COORDINATION ARRANGEMENTS (CCA)

CCA arrangements will be further evaluated. Identification of main relevant scenarios for the CCA and creation of further Situation Maps could serve as a further contribution to increase the Union's overall preparedness in the ambit of political coordination.

- further work to be carried out to follow up previous exercises for the evaluation of the arrangements and identify future challenges for the EU to manage crises on a political level;
- Council Secretariat, in close collaboration with the Commission, and under Member States' guidance to identify main relevant scenarios for the CCA, to refine the Situation Map established for the CCAEX08 and to explore the elaboration of 2-3 additional Situation Maps for these scenarios.
- a workshop to be held by the future presidencies to evaluate achieved progress and discuss future direction for CCA;
- CCAEX09 is planned to take place during the Swedish Presidency.

6. THE CHALLENGE FROM CHEMICAL, BIOLOGICAL, RADIOLOGICAL AND NUCLEAR RISKS (CBRN)

The Commission has set up a Task Force with the aim to help to develop a policy on CBRN.

- the Commission to submit a package of proposals on CBRN in June 2009, including action plans on bio-preparedness, on radiological and nuclear risk reduction, the chemical threat, as well as a Commission Staff Paper on "bridging Security and Health".

- corresponding conclusions to be adopted by the Council.

7. PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURES (EPCIP)

The Directive on the Identification and Designation of European Critical Infrastructure will be adopted before the end of the year. It is accompanied by non-Binding Guidelines addressing the process of identification of Critical Infrastructure.

The Commission has submitted a proposal for a Council Decision on a Critical Infrastructure Warning Information Network (CIWIN).

- Member States and the Commission to implement the Directive once it has entered into force;

- the proposal for Council Decision on CIWIN to be adopted by the Council.