SECRETARIAT GENERAL
DG IV

ACCORD EUR-OPA RISQUES MAJEURS
EUR-OPA MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT

Strasbourg, 7 January 2005 AP/CAT (2005) 2

OPEN PARTIAL AGREEMENT ON THE PREVENTION OF, PROTECTION AGAINST AND ORGANISATION OF RELIEF IN MAJOR NATURAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL DISASTERS

Meeting of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents
of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement,

Council of Europe Office, 55 avenue Kléber, PARIS 16e
10 January 2005

Council of Europe EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement : possible contribution to the international solidarity initiatives following tsunami in Asia

1. **The Scientific Community and Early Warning Systems for Tsunamis**

2. **Information Systems and training of trainers for risk prevention for the benefit of the populations and in particular of children**

The two proposals for contribution from the Agreement will be presented:

- through a letter from the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to the Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator of the United Nations (Head of ISDR): Mr. Jan Egeland (tel: 1 212 962 1234, email ochany@un.org).

- by the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement delegation lead by Mrs G. BATTAINI-DRAGONI to the ISDR WCDR Conference in Kobe (Japan) 18-22 January 2005.

It will be necessary to adapt these proposals after discussion, taking into account the proposals already defined at international level for setting up an alert system in South-East Asia.

INTRODUCTION

Tsunamis are prominent among natural phenomena associated with seriously damaging disasters due to a number of specific features. The periods between events vary among regions and may range from decades to hundreds of years. They are unpredictable events and increase the uncertainty of preventive action with a low social memory. Scientific knowledge in this area has focused on the definition of best practices for the management and minimization of risk. The users of that knowledge, however, usually criticize the fact that scientists tend to ignore the need for the translation of their expert knowledge to specific settings and to specific publics, with little concern for the development of more encompassing and integrated models for intervention.

This contextual situation shows us the urgent necessity to develop integrated actions research, which, based on knowledge already acquired in other contextual situations, can contribute to test and develop new methodologies, improving the interaction between experts and citizens.

Effective public and social action on this problem, however, depend on interdisciplinary collaboration, since tsunamis are as much natural as social disasters. From a social science perspective, there is a need to know both what lay people think, and know what scientists need to know to manage the associated risks.

The possible contribution of the Council of Europe EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement to the solidarity initiatives following the tsunami in Asia could use the experience developed by the Agreement in the field of prevention, early warning systems and training.

I. SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY AND EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS FOR TSUNAMIS

Context

Early warning has been one of the objectives faced by the International Decade for Natural Disasters Reduction.

First of all, when considering the type of tsunamigenic source and the patterns of propagation, many difficulties arise when deciding on the right time for announcing the occurrence of an emergency situation. Improvements in international co-operation could be a factor to define an adequate strategy for combining warning sensor data and data transmission to the appropriate Centre which would take action and the decision to pass on that warning to the competent authorities. Furthermore, the wave impact depends very much on the distance from the place where it is generated, its propagation and the local run up.

According to tests made, it seems that the different network configuration of sensors must be adapted to the specific area, source and run up expected. The experts involved in this project have to discuss the question related to the feasibility of networking with different equipment for actual warning. It is crucial to test the pilot warning system. Engineers, geophysicists, civil protection and harbor authorities must be involved in searching for the best structure to monitor the site under consideration.

The EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement has been active in the field of early warning systems for a long time, in particular with regard to tsunamis. More recently, within the programme implemented in the framework of the Agreement, in co-operation with the European Commission DG Research on the "Mobilisation of the scientific community for risk management" (2001-2002), a proposal was made during a workshop on "Coastal and tsunami early warning systems" held in Lagos, Portugal, on 1-3 November 2001 at the initiative of the European Centre on Urban Risks (CERU) in Lisbon, on the setting up of an early warning system concerning occurrence of tsunamis in the Mediterranean Basin.

This workshop formulated the following specific proposals and recommendations:

- there is an urgent need to implement a European Tsunami Programme in the coming years;
- considering the scientific knowledge and know-how presently available, some actions can be rapidly enforced, in particular by:

    - establishing or improving local tsunami warning systems;
    - elaborating tsunami risk maps;
    - helping in training technical staff eventually confronted with tsunami related disasters.

PROPOSAL

It could be proposed to organise in the near future an International Conference on Early Warning Systems concerning tsunamis comprising two main topics :

1- State-of-the-art of knowledge concerning tsunamis, operational early warning systems existing on the Pacific coasts (US and Japan) and in other regions;

2- Possible contributions from the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement and its network of Centres to the proposal for setting up an early warning system in

Asia and in the Mediterranean Basin. (Given that it is a question of the Mediterranean Basin, this would be a follow up to the Lagos workshop).

This Conference could provide the opportunity for a high level event (Secretaries General) between the United Nations, the European Union and the Council of Europe. On this occasion, the specific contribution from the Agreement as a partner to the United Nations and the European Union for the specific actions to be defined with regard to South-East Asia, could be clarified.

Simultaneously and by means of the programme to be finalised between now and the Conference, an exchange of views could be envisaged to decide upon a future specific slot for the intervention of the Agreement in the context of international co-operation.

From the organisational point of view, a small group of experts from the Mediterranean Centres of the Agreement in particular CERU (Portugal), ECILS (Skopje), CUEBC (Ravello, Italy), ICOD (Malta) and advisers to the Agreement will define the basis of this conference and the key experts to be invited.

The European Commission, the European Space Agency, UNESCO, ICSU may be invited to join the initiative.

Expected results

Development and cooperation of the warning systems associated with information systems for the benefit of the populations. The Specialised Euro-Mediterranean Centres of the Agreement could contribute significantly to this achievement.

II. INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND TRAINING OF TRAINERS FOR RISK PREVENTION FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE POPULATION

Context

The development of educational and training material should be organized in modules, the contents of which will be linked to the characteristics of the community in question. Many partners should be involved in programmes dedicated to ensuring wider participation with a view to effective and successful applications.

So, in order to exchange experiences and having in mind that preparedness is the major component to mitigate natural hazards, the effective participation results of the partners means that a better clarification on the strategic policy can be adopted.

The Agreement, through programmes carried out by its Euro-Mediterranean Centres and in the perspective of prevention and behaviour in a disaster situation, has developed a series of initiatives dealing with information systems for the benefit of the population, in particular for school children concerning risk prevention : natural risk, technological risks, health risks, risks linked to the instrumentalisation of violence.

We can quote:

-The IRIS (*International System of Information on Risks*) AP/CAT (2003) 7,
- The "Net of the Street": AP/CAT (2001)29 rev3 with implication in Morocco and Algeria)
- Risk Prevention in schools: AP/CAT (2003)11 rev 2,
- Web Site "*Be Safe Net*" developed by the Euro-Mediterranean Centres from Nicosia (Cyprus), Sofia (Bulgaria)Ravello (Italy), Strasbourg (France)
- The Programme developed in Seine Saint Denis (France) on Risk Prevention in schools since 2003
-The series of International Conferences organized by the European Centre of Sofia (Bulgaria),
-Setting up of risk Prevention Plan for risk prevention in the schools of the City of GOMA in the Democratic Republic of Cong, June-July 2003

PROPOSAL

On such a basis, two types of actions could be proposed in line with the first proposal on warning systems.

Training

The proposal for training programmes for trainers in charge of risk prevention awareness of school children could be developed by a small group of experts comprising persons responsible for projects carried out under the auspices of the Agreement.

International partners should examine the specific field of the training for which support from the Agreement would be justified. The Agreement could assist in the mobility of the competent persons who will make their experience available.

Working method:

A steering group could be rapidly set up and make its proposals at its meeting of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents beginning 2005.

Information of the population

Experts could be made available from the network of the Agreement's Centres, particularly those implicated in the information projects for the population in the case of crisis and natural disasters such as:

- the Street Net
- the Be-Safe-Net web site.