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**EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT  
(EUR-OPA)**

**Meeting of the National Platforms and HFA Focal Points**

**Bonn (Germany), 19-20 February 2009**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

## Table of Content

1	Introduction .....	3
2	Main topics .....	3
3	Status Quo of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and the developments and trends of National Platforms and HFA Focal Points .....	3
4	Cooperation .....	5
5	Communication and Information Tools for DRM .....	5
5.1	PreventionWeb .....	5
5.2	linkER .....	5
5.3	Global Platform .....	5
6	Common Objectives – Results from the Working Groups of the Meeting .....	6
6.1	Working Group A .....	6
6.2	The Working Group B .....	7
7	Climate Change .....	7
8	Conclusions .....	9
9	Appendix .....	10

## **1 Introduction**

An increase in disasters could be observed in 2008. Cyclone Nargis killed over 138.000 people in Myanmar and the Sichuan earthquake in China caused the deaths of over 87.000 people. The total death toll was three times more than the annual average of 67.000 between 2000 and 2007. Similar developments could be observed for disaster costs. In 2008 the cost doubled from the average of US\$81 billion (2000-2007) to US\$181 billion.

In view of the increasing risk due to climate change and the intensification of extreme weather, the question arises what kind of coordination and cooperation National Platforms and the HFA Focal Points need to meet this challenging risks situation.

Not only developing countries are hard hit by the negative developments. Also the European countries suffer from the repercussions of climate change. Storm "Emma" for example caused damages in a number of European countries.

## **2 Main topics**

On 19-20 February 2009 21 National Platforms and HFA Focal Points met in Bonn. The meeting focused on the following topics:

- a) Status of Disaster Risk Reduction developments and trends of National Platforms and HFA Focal Points in Europe and Globally
- b) Upcoming events and initiatives
- c) Cooperation and Visibility of NP and HFA FP
- d) Communication and Information Tools for DRM
- e) Climate Change

## **3 Status Quo of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and the developments and trends of National Platforms and HFA Focal Points**

Following a welcome of the meeting the state of the art concerning the National Platforms and the HFA Focal Points has been presented by the **UNISDR**. The different implementation status of national DRR institutions and regional cooperation have been summarised.

In Europe out of 46 countries, 33 have designated HFA Focal Points, 10 have a National Platform, Macedonia has a National Platform that is currently in the process of verification by the Government and 4 including: Turkey, Norway, Georgia and Poland are on the path of establishing one. It has been shown that different networking initiatives exist on the regional scale. For example: the DPPI-SEE, CEUDIP and the A European Network of NPs and HFA Focal Points.

In a review of the year 2008 some achievements of the NP and HFA FP have been presented as well as the events that took place in different countries like Switzerland, Moldova and the Turkey. These events adverted to the importance of DRR on different scales (Turkey-EUROPA Istanbul event). Furthermore agreements like the biannual work plan on DRM of the Sofia Ministerial Conference made clear that DRR issues are moving forward.

To support NP and HFA FP in DRR the assistance of the UN-ISDR-Europe through Capacity Building and Training was underlined by UN-ISDR. Not only new national platforms could be established in countries like Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan, Italy and Senegal, but also the cooperation between developed and developing countries was strengthened (IDRC Davos, SWOTs in Senegal).

UN-ISDR supported NP in sharing information, in building capacities and organizing meetings. That could be reached through training workshops, guidance material, publication of good practices, HFA monitoring, toolkit development and miscellaneous concepts papers e.g. "Twinning of National Platforms" for Europe.

In spite of the overall positive review of the year 2008 the following gaps and problems have been identified by UN-ISDR:

- Moving from concept to reality
- Integration of science in DRR - making the most of scientific knowledge
- Redundancy and duplicated efforts (e.g. events)
- Lack of cooperation and communications, information exchange
- Access to funds and integration of private sector

- Visibility (regional/international)
- Use of the topics opportunity / Build more on the opportunity of the topic
- Need for advocacy on disaster reduction efforts nationally, regionally and internationally
- Translations of important documents?
- Training and guidance

The European Report of the HFA outlined the status of the implementation of the HFA for the region. The report which was accomplished by the UN-ISDR supported by DKKV, involved 16 countries which contributed to the survey. For most of the HFA priorities the National Platform reported that: with recognized limitations in capacities and resources substantial achievement are attained. It allowed to present some recommendations for DRR related issues like: strengthening National Platforms by governments, promoting Capacity Building for DRR, improving knowledge and information sharing.

It was mentioned that due to the voluminous extent of the report it was quite difficult to present it to politicians and that therefore a summary would be of great use. The complicated reporting procedure was questioned. As positive effect it was recognized that the assessment supported the DRR dialogue on national basis. The intention of updating the report has been stated.

Following questions revealed during the discussion:

- Will the different regional reports be comparable?
- What are the main differences between the regions?
- What will be done to work on the gaps identified?
- How can the developments in DRR be described between 2005-2008?
- What are the links between European National Platforms and Platforms in Africa or Asia?
- What is the responsibility of the NP and which are those of governments?

In his presentation **the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement** emphasized the need for cooperation and an interdisciplinary approach for DRR. In the context of the Major Hazard Agreements as an open and partial network of 22 countries, comparative analysis of the countries has been done and DRR relevant good practices have been identified. For the next 5 years period the promotion of NP and measures to make them more flexible are planned. In addition, information exchange is seen as an important device to convince countries to establish NP. It was stressed that the creation of new NP is a major priority of the CoE in the future. However, independent of naming aspects and structural differences, cooperation and networking is needed, because of the contents and the common objectives, of the NP and HFA FP.

As regards recent developments in Community civil protection policy, the **European Commission**/DG Environment Civil protection Unit observes an increasing amount of activations to the Community civil protection Mechanism, due inter alia to the increase of extreme natural events. In comparison to the year 2000 with only 3 activations, the Mechanism was activated 20 times in 2008.

An important development was the adoption of a Communication on improving the EU's response capacity in March 2008. It took an integrated approach encompassing all stages of disasters (prevention, preparation, immediate response, recovery), addressing all types of disasters (inside or outside the EU, natural or man-made), and covering all EU instruments. It included the proposals to reinforce the Community civil protection Mechanism, to further develop the MIC (Monitoring and Information Centre), to improve the overall response capacity, and to launch a new initiative for European disaster management training.

In February 2009, the European Commission will adopt a Communication on a Community approach to the prevention of natural and man-made disasters and a Communication on an EU strategy for supporting disaster risk reduction in developing countries.

The prevention Communication will include the following proposals:

- creating the conditions for the development of knowledge based disaster prevention policies,
- linking the actors and policies throughout the disaster management cycle (developing lessons learnt, reinforcing early warning tools),
- making existing instruments perform better for disaster prevention

The Adaptation to Climate Change White Paper, following up on the Green Paper on climate change presented in 2007 is further developed. The White paper is expected to be published at the end of March.

*Action: National Platforms are awaiting the presentation of the white papers from the EU and ensure that they are distributed to the correct stakeholders for any response required.*

## **4 Cooperation**

The integration of DRR into decision making processes is still a challenging task. Therefore and in spite of different structures of NP, there is a need of cross-sectoral and cross-border cooperation.

Regional aspects can be coordinated, expertise and good practices exchanged, and the scientific knowledge made available for DRR issues through networking. Overall there is a great potential of avoiding duplication and working more efficiently. The integration of disaster risk reduction into development policies, planning and programmes is a common objective of the NP and HFA FP. Therefore and with regard to improve the visibility of DRR-issues on the upcoming events in 2009 (e.g. COP 15) a common approach would be very promising. Simultaneously there could reveal opportunities on supporting political decisions and on international projects.

A common understanding of the added value of and the need for cooperation was shared by the participants. A discussion ensued about the possible ways of cooperation and the most appropriate structure to be chosen.

Some participants felt uneasy with the name used by "A European Platform of National Platforms and HFA Focal Points" established by the signatories of an Agreement in Basel, April 2007. In order to avoid any misunderstanding on what "a network" represents, it was suggested by some that it should consider modifying its name.

Guiding questions to further improve the way NP cooperates should be oriented towards the questions: What would we like to achieve? and Where would we like to be in 5 years time?

*Action: It was proposed that 'A' ENNP may consider changing its name and inform National Platforms and HFA Focal points of their decision.*

## **5 Communication and Information Tools for DRM**

### **5.1 PreventionWeb**

The presentation of the PreventionWeb as a common information platform for the disaster risk reduction community reflected the complexity of DRR and ISDR. It can be used by the DRR community as a wide-ranging information resource for national and regional questions. Furthermore it acts as a tool to share information and experience on the basis of the web technologies. An interesting component of the projects is a calendar which can be integrated in national platforms websites enabling an up to date event schedule.

The website can be accessed by the following hyperlink:  
<http://www.preventionweb.net/>

*Action: Those countries that had any concerns about the website or content on their web pages to contact the UN Prevention website team directly.*

### **5.2 linkER**

The presentation of the linkER project as a part of the GMES project stressed the importance of disaster management information and product: like rapid mapping, forecasting and reconstruction monitoring. An efficient linkage between the products and the disaster manager can only be achieved if a common understanding for the necessity of interfaces is reached and furthermore the development of such interfaces proceeds. Some examples of DRM-products and their possible application has been presented.

### **5.3 Global Platform**

The GP as the main body of the ISDR system is a multi-stakeholder event opened to governments and organizations. High level UN agencies, regional bodies, international financing institutions and

other representatives are expected to join. Its objective is to make recommendations on DRR and upgrade the national resilience capacities. Topics like: reducing vulnerability, climate change, environmental degradation, early warning, critical infrastructures, relief and recovery are arranged in the agenda. The topics will be treated in the following sessions:

- Pre-Session
- Plenary Session
- Informal Plenary Session
- Side events

It was said that there is little prominent place for NP to present themselves. It was proposed to NP to present themselves in the Pre-Session, the Informal Plenary Session or at the side events. Due to logistical reason the event could not be opened to a broader range of organizations.

Interesting results are expected during the meeting for example from the World Bank and UN presenting an economic study on disaster reduction. The Global Assessment Report of ISDR will be presented too.

*Action: Participants were asked to consult with the relevant departments in their own country as to the level of delegation they would send to Geneva in June and to consider how best NP representations can be made.*

## **6 Common Objectives – Results from the Working Groups of the Meeting**

The following results from the two Working Groups were presented to the plenary.

### **6.1 Working Group A**

During a round of introduction important aspects revealed which could be aggregated to the following main topics: information exchange, UN-ISDR and common objectives of the NP and HFA FP

#### **TOP 1: NP can support each other by sharing**

- good practices on
  - o the development of NPs
  - o political advise
  - o coordination
- information about
  - o national plans on DRR
  - o ways of rising Public Awareness
  - o successes on moving forward on governments DRR agenda

#### **TOP 2: The role of UN-ISDR**

- Facilitating the information exchange
- Provide key documents on topics
- Organize national and regional workshops
- Regional cooperation/coordination

#### **TOP 3: Common objectives were of the participant detected were:**

- Adaptation to Climate Change and extreme weather events
- Critical infrastructures (recovering public infrastructures)
- Local level / Community level approach
- Safety level standards
- Risk Mapping and assessments incl. data collection
- Self assessments
- Extra terrestrial hazards and the need of early warning

The common objectives provide a promising basis for cooperation and collaboration of the NP within the scope of international projects. Simultaneously duplicated efforts could be avoided by sharing information, cooperating and networking within the framework of DRR issues.

## **6.2 The Working Group B**

This group organized the discussion around three questions:

- a) *What are the key events in 2009?*
- b) *What are our common goals?*
- c) *What is the added value provided by involving National Platforms and HFA Focal points?*

As key events in 2009 the

- Launch of the Global Assessment Report, May
- Global Platform for Disaster Reduction in Geneva, June
- Climate negotiations throughout the year but especially COP 15 in Copenhagen, December
- World Climate Conference, WMO Geneva, August

were identified. In an open and very constructive discussion the following ideas were developed in order to raise visibility for National Platforms to the public and provide added value to important topics. Following the Working Group session they were presented in the plenary:

### Actions:

1. *At the Global Platform a side event on National Platforms and HFA Focal points as well as a slot in the Plenary should be organised*
2. *At the different regional launches of the Global Assessment Report presentations on National platforms and HFA Focal Points to be presented in a slot in the Plenary of the event.*
3. *In order to promote the integration of relevant components of disaster reduction into adaptation to the negative effects of Climate Change, the National Platforms and HFA Focal Points should start to lobby activities for the topic at national level. A Common Statement as an outcome of the meeting should be developed. The organisation of a European Forum 2010 on "Water related events and coastal zones" should be considered.*
4. *The Council of Europe Major Hazards Agreement should elaborate possibilities to invite National Platforms and HFA Focal points to their technical meetings*
5. *Information with regard to specific expertise at National Platforms should be collected, list of members and later on possibly a database to allow easy identification of and access to existing know-how at National Platforms. The aim would be to support the exchange of expertise between the different National Platforms and with the regional organisations.*
6. *The members of the working group expressed their interest in participating jointly in European projects. The idea of a "European Awareness Campaign" (topic Water) was raised.*

## **7 Climate Change**

Climate Change was another crucial topic of the meeting. The UNFCCC highlighted the convention and the approach to adaptation to Climate Change. This approach consists of three complementary bodies:

- a) Subsidiary body for Implementation, Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological advice and an ad-hoc Working group on long-term Cooperative Action.

"National adaptation programmes of action - so called NAPAs - provide a process for Least Developed Countries to identify priority activities that respond to their urgent and immediate needs to adapt to climate change [...]" (UNFCCC website). Out of 430 projects implemented in the framework of 39 NAPAs, 26 were numbered as DRR related.

The Nairobi Work Programme (2005-2010) with its objective to assist all Parties, in particular developing countries, including the least developed countries and small island developing States to improve their understanding and assessment of impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate

change. The body can be understood as a interdisciplinary entity covering scientific, methodological and technical aspects needed for CC adaptation.

The Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA), is meant to be an effective and sustained instrument to adaptation to CC and the implementation of the Bali Action Plan. It includes international cooperation within the scope of adaptation, DRM and DRR-strategies.

"It will complete its work in 2009 and present the outcome of its work to the Conference of the Parties for adoption at its fifteenth session." (UNFCCC website)

The following opportunities to link the experience of the DRR community were underlined:

- Mandated SBSTA activities
- Involvement in NWP (Nairobi Work Programme) at:
  - o Focal point forum
  - o NWP Workshops
- Join the AWG-LCA process (ad-hock working group)
- Regional cooperation

On the path to COP 15 on 7-18 December 2009 important task has to be discussed:

- integrating practices, tools and systems for climate risk assessment and management, and DRR strategies into national policies and programmes 10-12 March, Cuba
- increasing economic resilience to climate change and reducing reliance on vulnerable economic sectors. April, Egypt
- Advancing the integration of various approaches to adaptation planning, including scaling up of local and community-based adaptation

Further opportunities to discuss CC issues can be within the framework of different AWG-LCA meetings

- 1) **AWG-LCA 5**: 29 March – 8 April, Bonn
- 2) **AWG-LCA 6 & SB 30**: 1 – 12 June, Bonn
- 3) **AWG-LCA 7**: 28 Sept – 9 October, Bangkok
- 4) AWG-LCA 8, COP 15 and CMP 5.

The EU objective concerning CC is to maintain global warming at +2°C , to limit the resulting risks and reduce adaptation efforts. Therefore mitigation efforts are needed. Because of the inevitable need of adaptation the EU Adaptation Framework covers means like:

- *Strengthen the Knowledge/Evidence Base*
- *Mainstream climate Adaptation into key policy areas (such as agriculture)*
- *Work in partnership with the EU Member States*
- *Advance work internationally on Adaptation*

Once again the white paper on Adaptation to climate change is wishfully awaited by the NP and HFA FP.

Norway mentioned a joint proposal from the Norwegian MFA and the ISDR Secretariat to make a special report under the IPCC on the links between DRR and climate change adaptation. The report will address security issues in connection with climate change. They requested support from other countries for this initiative.

*Action: Look out for these papers, ensure they are distributed to the correct recipients and look to supporting this initiative*

Sweden reminded colleagues that they will take over the EU Presidency in June. A Climate Change conference is planned for 27-29 July in Stockholm and colleagues were asked to ensure that those with the necessary expertise were able to attend.

*Action: NPs to pass on information to climate change experts for Stockholm meeting*



## **8 Conclusions**

Where do we want to be in 5 years?

Disaster Risk Reduction requires complex actions at different levels – in addition it is expected that Climate Change will lead to a change of magnitude and frequency of climate related hazards in future. For the most of the NP this problem will exceed their capacities. Therefore coordination and cooperation is needed more then ever. Negotiation should not fail on naming aspects of the grouping name. Nevertheless a name is needed. To strengthen the visibility - DRR requires a permanent attention. Isolated national initiatives are at risk to fail, therefore regional efforts are required at the European level.

National Platforms and HFA Focal Points should elaborate opportunities to develop jointly project proposals to be presented to funding agencies in order to raise additional financial support for DRR.

Major events in 2009 will take place like the GP and the Conference of the Parties in (COP 15) in Copenhagen. During theses events it is necessary to present NP as an entity, to reach the maximum of visibility and impact on DRR contents. DRR should become an identifiable part of the next protocol in Copenhagen. The Cuba meeting is an opportunity to prepare the next step in this direction.

## Statement

March 2009

### **Disaster Risk Reduction as an Important Process for Adaptation to Climate Change**

Representatives of National Platforms and HFA Focal Points from 18 countries in Europe, as well as from the Council of Europe Major Hazard Agreement, UN-ISDR secretariat and the European Commission met on February 19-20 in Bonn on the invitation of the German National Platform (DKKV).

Participants discussed a range of topics which included:

- Closer links among National Platforms and with the UNISDR secretariat, Council of Europe and the EC;
- Reporting mechanisms on HFA implementation;
- The 2009 Global Platform and National Platforms possible role and input; and
- Climate change, the links between adaptation and disaster risk reduction

The role of disaster risk reduction in adaptation to climate change was at the core of the discussions. The 4<sup>th</sup> report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) clearly warned about the expected negative impacts of climate change. Climate changes is already taking place and even if there was an immediate curtailing of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, people would still have to live with a changing climate and its effects in the coming decades. The consequences will have an impact on all regions.

Meteorological and hydrological events comprise 75% of the disasters resulting from natural events. An increase in natural hazards and extreme weather events is expected in the coming decades. They are likely to affect the distribution and the size of vulnerable areas.

The process of disaster risk reduction aims to mitigate the impacts of natural hazards and extreme weather events by reducing vulnerability and improving society's resilience. Thus, it is essential that relevant elements of disaster risk reduction become an integral part of climate adaptation strategies.

Immediate and substantial planning of strategies and action is needed for all countries, and especially for developing countries, that do not have sufficient resources to meet the challenges of adaptation to climate change.

The following important events and declarations reflect the challenges with adaptation to climate change:

- Stockholm Plan of Action for Integrating Disaster Reduction and Climate Change Impacts in Poverty Reduction
- Oslo Policy Forum 2008: Changing the way we develop: dealing with disasters in Climate Change
- Global Humanitarian Forum 2008 – The Human Face of Climate Change
- The Nairobi Work Programme
- The Action Plan of Bali

The representatives of National Platforms and HFA Focal Points suggest that the work being done by nations should support the integration of relevant components of disaster risk reduction as an important element in adaptation strategies to cope with natural hazards and extreme events.

They further suggest that:

- UN-ISDR should select the integration of relevant components of disaster risk reduction into adaptation for climate change as the key topic of the Global Platform in June 2009 in Geneva and give the necessary visibility to the topic.
- WMO should give a prominent role to disaster risk reduction at the World Climate Conference in August.
- One of the outcomes of COP 15 in Copenhagen in December 2009 should be to encourage Member States to incorporate relevant components of disaster risk reduction in their work (or in their programmes) promoting adaptation to climate change.