



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

MEMO

Brussels, 8 April 2014

Boosting global efforts to reduce the impact of disasters: Commission charts the course for EU action

What is the action?

Today the European Commission lays out its primary vision on how the European Union should contribute to the global efforts to reduce the impact of disasters.

The Commission has adopted a Communication on The Post 2015 Hyogo Framework for Action: Managing Risks to achieve Resilience. This document is the basis for upcoming discussions between the Member States, the European Parliament and other stakeholders who will work on a common EU position for the global negotiations at the level of the United Nations. These talks will focus on how to mitigate the impact of natural and man-made disasters and to build a new framework for disaster risk reduction - the so-called post 2015 Hyogo Framework for Action.

What is the purpose?

During recent years, disasters are increasing both in frequency and intensity and this trend is likely to continue. All countries are vulnerable: developing countries suffer a greater loss of life while developed nations bear higher economic costs. In the EU alone natural disasters have caused more than 80 000 deaths and €95 billion in economic losses during the last decade.

To address these alarming trends, prevention and risk management policies are essential. A renewed post-2015 Hyogo Framework for Action is a significant opportunity to advance disaster risk management across the world.

The European Commission has built the recommendations based upon the past achievements in disaster risk management of a range of EU policies including civil protection, environmental protection, internal security, climate change adaptation, health, research and innovation and external action. These achievements are an important EU contribution towards building a coherent policy on disaster risk management at European and international levels.

What is the Hyogo Framework for Action?

The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) "Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters" is a 10-year plan adopted by 168 UN Member States who voluntarily committed to work on five priorities for action with the objective of making the world safer from natural hazards and to build disaster resilience. Adopted in 2005, the HFA will expire in 2015. A wide consultation process is taking place on shaping the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction.

What are the key proposals of the Commission?

1. More transparency and better governance of the new post 2015 Hyogo framework for Action

The European Commission suggests governance standards, periodic peer reviews and the collection and sharing of globally comparable data on disaster losses and hazards.

2. Focus on results

The European Commission proposes the introduction of targets and measurable actions to reduce disaster risks.

3. Disaster risk reduction measures should contribute to sustainable and smart growth

All major infrastructure and projects should be risk-sensitive and climate-and-disaster-resilient.

Innovative technologies and instruments to support disaster management should be further encouraged (early-warning systems, resilient infrastructure and buildings, green infrastructure, risk communication etc) in order to lead to increased business opportunities and contribute to green growth.

4. Special attention to the most vulnerable

The Commission also expects the new Hyogo Framework for Action to be more gender-sensitive and to target vulnerable groups such as children, elderly people, persons with disabilities, the homeless and the poor. Particular attention should be paid to building resilience in all urban and vulnerable rural settings, as well as in coastal areas.

Alongside natural hazards, a comprehensive international framework should also address conflict and other forms of violence and state fragility as well as technological risks, food and nutrition insecurity and epidemics.

What are some of the main achievements related to disaster risk management in the EU in recent years?

- Prevention and risk management measures have been integrated in a number of key EU policies and financial instruments (i.e. climate change adaptation, cohesion policy, transport and energy, research and innovation, cross-border health threats, environmental impact assessment, and others);
- The Commission has prepared a first cross-sectoral overview of risks in the EU and launched an initiative with EU Member States to map risks and share information about them. Multi-hazard national risk assessments are to be produced by Member States by the end of 2015;
- Data availability, accessibility, sharing and comparability has been improved, including ongoing work with Member States and international partners towards establishing European standards and protocols for recording disaster losses;
- Ways to effectively use insurance as an incentive for risk awareness, prevention and mitigation are being explored;
- Enhanced preparedness for response through the development of a voluntary pool of pre-committed disaster-response capacities, better response planning, a training network, and reinforced cooperation among authorities in the field of training and exercises, strengthened early warning systems.

What is the EU doing in order to boost resilience and disaster risk reduction in developing countries?

Reducing vulnerability and building the resilience of populations at risk are prerequisites for poverty reduction and sustainable development. This is why, the EU is committed to investing in these priorities. Risk management is already a part of all EU humanitarian aid and development assistance programmes – and will become an even more integral component in the future.

Significant progress is already being made. Three recent EU initiatives SHARE ('Supporting the Horn of Africa's Resilience'), AGIR (the Global Alliance for Resilience in the Sahel region) and the Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA) are already contributing to building the resilience of some of the world's most vulnerable communities.

The Disaster Preparedness programme (DIPECHO) of the European Commission funds projects based on simple preparatory measures emphasizing training, capacity-building, awareness-raising and early-warning systems of local communities around the globe. DIPECHO has proven extremely effective in limiting damage and saving lives when hazards suddenly strike.

What are the next steps?

The ideas presented in this Communication will be the basis of further dialogue with EU Member States, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee and other stakeholders (civil society, academia, the private sector) as well as international partners and the UN System.

The outcomes of this dialogue will feed into the preparatory process for the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (Sendai Summit) scheduled for March 2015, and the two Preparatory Committee meetings at UN level that will take place on 14-15 July and 17-18 November 2014 in Geneva.

For more information

The European Commission's humanitarian aid and civil protection:

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm

Commissioner Georgieva's website:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/georgieva/index_en.htm

Fact sheet on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR):

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/thematic/disaster_risk_reduction.pdf

Fact sheet on resilience:

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/thematic/EU_building_resilience_en.pdf

Fact sheet on Disaster Risk Management:

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/thematic/disaster_risk_management_en.pdf