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## **MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION**

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 103(2) of the Rules of Procedure

by Vittorio Prodi

on behalf of the ALDE Group

on the natural disasters in the EU this summer

**European Parliament resolution on the natural disasters in the EU this summer**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Commission's report on climate change and the European water dimension,
- having regard to Rule 103(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas southern Europe – particularly Spain and Portugal – has suffered from severe droughts in the past two years and once again faced a severe drought this summer,
- B. whereas the centre and south of Spain may have lost at least half of their cereal crop because of the drought, some areas having their entire crop ruined,
- C. whereas low water levels in river reservoirs and streams may also affect the fishing industry,
- D. whereas France has also experienced drought conditions during the current summer, and although this drought was less severe than in previous years, some 60 of the 97 departments imposed restrictions on the use of water,
- E. whereas a report issued by the EU's Environment Agency considers Spain and Portugal to be among the countries most affected by climate change,
- F. whereas it was underlined in a resolution adopted by Parliament in May 2005 that persistent droughts greatly increase the risks of devastating forest fires with all their drastic and obvious consequences,
- G. whereas such forest fires did break out in Spain, France and more dramatically in Portugal where, given their large number, they confounded attempts to contain them, killed at least 15 people and destroyed and devastated 100 homes and around 180 000 hectares of land, Northern Portugal being the most affected area, with emergency evacuations being necessary in many villages,
- H. whereas the hot weather and wind increased the frequency and intensity of the fires,
- I. whereas a report published this year by the Environment Agency underlined that extreme floods due to climate change are the most common type of natural disaster in the EU and that the number of sudden localised but severe floods is expected to rise in central, northern and north-eastern Europe,
- J. whereas Central Europe – Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Bulgaria and even Slovenia and Croatia – had recently been severely hit by flooding, Romania being the worst affected country, where at least 31 people died and damage was estimated at € 375 million,

- K. whereas these floods have left a large number of people missing, homeless or evacuated from their devastated homes, have damaged telecommunication systems, bridges, roads and railway networks and may for a certain period of time affect river ecosystems, groundwater replenishment and soil fertility,
- L. whereas Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi were very severely hit by Hurricane Katrina last week,
- M. whereas the number of victims is estimated at a minimum of 10 000, mainly among the poor black population of big cities, particularly New Orleans, and most of the survivors have been left homeless,
- N. whereas the part played by climate change in the current series of tragic natural disasters has to be considered,
1. Expresses its deepest sympathy with the families of the victims, including those who died while fighting fires;
  2. Is deeply concerned about the frequent and recurrent occurrence every year of natural disasters in Europe, which are becoming more and more serious;
  3. Applauds the fact that when the Portuguese fire-fighters were becoming increasingly overwhelmed by the many fires, assistance in the form of aeroplanes, helicopters and other fire-fighting equipment and personnel was sent by Spain, France, Belgium, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands;
  4. Recalls the Solidarity Fund in the EU budget, which was expressly instituted to cope with such disasters, and hopes that the Commission will quickly release the necessary funds once the relevant Member States have submitted their requests for assistance;
  5. Hopes also that the Commission will endeavour to aid those candidate countries that have been severely affected by the extreme climatic conditions, either financially or by means of technical aid, particularly Romania and Bulgaria;
  6. Notes that fire-fighting is an extremely difficult exercise and therefore the best way to combat fires is to prevent them in the first place; recalls in this respect the onus on landowners both to prevent fires from breaking out on their own land and to prevent them from spreading easily onto their land from adjoining areas; notes in this respect the responsibility of landowners to keep their wooded areas free of dead wood and any other flammable materials;
  7. Encourages Member States to recommend the appointment of a management committee in cases of multiple ownership; notes that such a committee could maintain the land, in particular with a view to fire prevention, in wooded areas;
  8. Believes that the national authorities have a role to play in encouraging fire-breaks, the planting of some fire-resistant trees and perhaps a more transparent ownership regime for wooded areas; calls on Member State authorities in the affected areas to review their own fire-fighting capabilities and to consider in particular whether volunteer fire-fighting is the

most reliable organisational approach;

9. Takes the view, furthermore, that Member States and candidate countries need to be more mindful of potential flooding scenarios when considering new construction, urban development or infrastructure permits; welcomes the fact that Germany has this year tabled a new draft flood protection law, which prohibits new industrial or housing development in areas susceptible to flooding; considers that Member States should also include potential flooding scenarios as an integral part of any consideration of applications for authorisation of new construction, urban development or infrastructure projects;
10. Notes that the EU Environment Agency had warned Member States several times of the increased risk of flooding and forest fires;
11. Notes that the role played by climate change cannot be discounted when considering the increased frequency of extreme climatic conditions in Europe;
12. Calls on the Commission to develop an EU-wide approach to these matters, especially water policy and the protection of forests against fire, and to support the necessary measures to prevent such natural risks, even if responsibility for such action remains firmly on the shoulders of Member States;
13. Expresses its deepest sympathy with the families of the victims and notes with regret that the often predicted impact of climate change has become a reality in that poor sections of society living in coastal regions bore the brunt of the hurricane;
14. Applauds the quick and generous response of the EU and Member States, which offered help to the US;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Governments of Portugal, Spain, France, Germany, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovenia, the Council and the Commission.