



Plenary sitting

B8-0393/2018

11.9.2018

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 123(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the July 2018 fires in Mati in the Attica region, Greece, and the EU's
response
(2018/2847(RSP))

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European Parliament resolution on July 2018 fires in Mati in the Attica region, Greece, and the EU's response (2018/2847(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 2012/2002 of 11 November 2002 establishing the European Union Solidarity Fund¹,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 (hereinafter ‘the Common Provisions Regulation’)²,
- having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - A. whereas Greece recently faced the most devastating wildfires in the history of any European country, resulting in the loss of 98 human lives, with hundreds injured, thousands homeless and incalculable material and environmental damage, leaving behind landscapes resembling a war zone;
 - B. whereas on 24 July 2018 Greece suffered from an explosive mixture of extreme adverse weather conditions, including a high heat wave and strong winds, and tinder-dry forests;
 - C. whereas forest fires in the EU burn on average half a million hectares of forest and natural lands every year; whereas although this amount varies considerably from one year to the next, 85 % of the total annual burnt area in Europe is located in five EU Mediterranean countries (Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Greece);
 - D. whereas in 2017 over 200 people were killed by natural disasters in Europe, and over one million hectares of forest were destroyed, with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism being activated 17 times for forest fire emergencies in Europe;
 - E. whereas the austerity policies implemented in Greece have resulted in the underfinancing of the Greek civil protection mechanism and have substantially weakened its capacity to respond effectively to emergencies;
 - F. whereas the disaster in eastern Attica has shown the need to have an early warning

¹ OJ L 311, 14.11.2002, p. 3.

² OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 320.

system to alert citizens and travellers of imminent or developing major emergencies and disasters if suffering and loss of life are to be prevented or reduced; whereas successive Greek governments have repeatedly failed to upgrade the ‘112’ European emergency number services to include an early warning system for citizens enabling national authorities to send alerts to citizens and travellers located in a specific area in the event of imminent disasters and emergencies;

- G. whereas the civil protection institutional framework in Greece suffers from legal fragmentation, formalism, a lack of operational readiness and polyarchy;
 - H. whereas Greece is the only European state without a national cadastre; whereas the lack of a comprehensive land registry, a proper forest registry and detailed maps constitutes a vacuum often exploited by unscrupulous developers who build on land after it is burned and cleared;
 - I. whereas according to the Technical Chamber of Greece there are hundreds of unauthorised constructions in Mati and hundreds of thousands nationwide; whereas the Greek Government has announced that a priority plan is under way to demolish 3 200 unlicensed buildings and structures for which irrevocable demolition protocols have already been issued, under the responsibility of the decentralised administration;
 - J. whereas the unprecedented destruction caused by the wildfires both in eastern and western Attica creates an imminent risk of flooding in the affected areas;
 - K. whereas the Commission activated the EU Civil Protection Mechanism on 24 July 2018, responding to the request for international assistance submitted by the Greek Government;
 - L. whereas the Greek prime minister took political responsibility for the wildfire and the reaction of the Greek authorities; whereas on 25 July 2018 the Greek Government announced a package of measures designed to alleviate distress and repair the material damage; whereas a judicial investigation into possible faults by state officials and the causes of the devastating fires in Attica is under way;
1. Expresses its profound grief and solidarity with the families of the deceased and the people living in the affected areas; pays tribute to the dedication of the firefighters, coast guard, volunteers and people who risked their lives to extinguish the wildfires and rescue their fellow citizens;
 2. Is concerned by the increasing number of natural disasters, which, according to experts, can essentially be attributed to climate change resulting in more extreme weather conditions, unsustainable and/or illegal construction and an increased vulnerability of forests due to mismanagement of natural resources and unsustainable land-use decisions; calls on the Commission and the Council, in line with the Europe 2020 target and their international commitments, to tackle climate change and to increase the budget for climate-related actions;
 3. Welcomes the activation of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism;
 4. Welcomes the strong solidarity shown by the Member States and third countries in

assisting Greece during the catastrophic wildfires with the supply of aerial support, fire-fighting equipment, medical professionals and other staff and expertise;

5. Calls on the Greek Government to upgrade, without delay, the '112' European emergency number services to include an early warning system for citizens and travellers located in an affected area;
6. Deeply regrets the negative impact of austerity measures on Greece's civil protection operational capacities;
7. Calls on the Greek authorities to allocate adequate funding to the Greek civil protection system in order to ensure optimum operational preparedness; calls for expenditure for civil protection mechanisms to be deducted from the calculation of the budget deficit;
8. Is concerned that Greece remains the only Member State not to have established a comprehensive national cadastre and forest registry; notes that some progress has been made in this area and calls on the Greek Government to complete the cadastre and forest registry without delay;
9. Calls for immediate restitution for affected citizens, for redress to be paid for material damage, and for the environmental costs to be compensated without red tape; notes that the Greek Government has activated the Special Development Plan for tackling the consequences of natural disasters and restoring affected areas;
10. Underlines that modernisation, rationalisation and simplification of the policy for natural disasters in Greece remains a top priority;
11. Calls on the Commission to mobilise the EU Solidarity Fund;
12. Calls on the Commission to ensure that all available instruments under the European structural and investment funds are used effectively for prevention activities, as well for the reconstruction and restoration of infrastructure and any other interventions necessary, in full cooperation with the Greek national and regional authorities;
13. Calls for Parliament, the Council and the Commission to expedite the interinstitutional negotiations on the new EU Civil Protection Mechanism, taking into consideration the magnitude of the destruction in Greece and other Member States during this summer;
14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments of the Member States and the regional and local authorities responsible for the affected areas.