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PROPOSTA DI RISOLUZIONE

presentata a seguito di una dichiarazione della Commissione

a norma dell'articolo 123, paragrafo 2, del regolamento

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

Il Parlamento europeo,

- having regard to Articles 2, 6 and 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
 - having regard to, inter alia, its resolutions of 28 April 2015 on ‘A new EU Forest Strategy: for forests and the forest-based sector’¹, of 16 September 2009 on forest fires in the summer of 2009², of 19 June 2008 on stepping up the Union’s disaster response capacity³, of 4 September 2007 on natural disasters⁴, of 7 September 2006 on forest fires and floods⁵, of 14 April 2005 on the drought in Portugal⁶, of 12 May 2005 on the drought in Spain⁷, and of 8 September 2005 on natural disasters (fires and floods) in Europe⁸, and its resolutions of 18 May 2006 on natural disasters (forest fires, droughts and floods) – agricultural aspects⁹, on natural disasters (fires, droughts and floods) – regional development aspects¹⁰, and on natural disasters (fires, droughts and floods) – environmental aspects¹¹,
 - having regard to Decision No 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism¹²,
 - having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 2012/2002 of 11 November 2002 establishing the European Union Solidarity Fund¹³,
 - visto l'articolo 123, paragrafo 2, del suo regolamento,
- A. whereas devastating forest fires affected Mati, in the Attica region of Greece, this summer, with numerous victims, including more than one hundred fatalities;
- B. whereas the fires in question have destroyed houses, severely damaged local and regional infrastructure and affected economic activities, especially those of small and medium-sized enterprises, agriculture and the potential of the tourism and hospitality

¹ OJ C 346, 21.9.2016, p. 17.

² OJ C 224 E, 19.8.2010, p. 1.

³ OJ C 286 E, 27.11.2009, p. 15.

⁴ OJ C 187 E, 24.7.2008, p. 55.

⁵ OJ C 305 E, 14.12.2006, p. 240.

⁶ OJ C 33 E, 9.2.2006, p. 599.

⁷ OJ C 92 E, 20.4.2006, p. 414.

⁸ OJ C 193 E, 17.8.2006, p. 322.

⁹ OJ C 297 E, 7.12.2006, p. 363.

¹⁰ OJ C 297 E, 7.12.2006, p. 369.

¹¹ OJ C 297 E, 7.12.2006, p. 375.

¹² OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 924.

¹³ OJ L 311, 14.11.2002, p. 3.

sectors;

- C. whereas drought and persistent fires are speeding up the process of desertification of large areas of southern Europe, seriously damaging the quality of life of the populations involved, and affecting agriculture, stockbreeding and the forest heritage;
- D. whereas over the coming decades, regardless of our global mitigation efforts, there is likely to be an increase in global temperature, with particularly adverse effects for southern Europe, which is predicted to be an extremely vulnerable region in terms of climate change and which has already experienced wildfires of unprecedented magnitude as a direct result of the extreme heatwaves;
- E. whereas the frequency, severity, complexity and impact of natural and man-made disasters across Europe have increased rapidly in recent years, resulting in loss of human life and property, with catastrophic short- and long-term effects on the economy of the regions affected, including depletion of the natural and cultural heritage, the destruction of economic and social infrastructure, and damage to the environment (in the case of wildfires, loss of natural habitat and biodiversity, deterioration of the microclimate and increases in greenhouse gas emissions);
- F. whereas these natural disasters have damaging economic and social consequences for local and regional economies, both in sectors such as tourism and in terms of productive activity in general;
- G. whereas prevention is of particular importance when it comes to protecting against natural, technological and environmental disasters;
- H. whereas the phenomenon of forest fires is also aggravated by encroaching abandonment of the countryside and its traditional activities, inadequate forest maintenance, the existence of large expanses of forest consisting of a single tree species, the planting of unsuitable tree varieties, the absence of a proper prevention policy and insufficiently severe penalties where fires are started deliberately, together with the inadequate implementation of laws prohibiting illegal building and ensuring reforestation;
- I. whereas some Member States still lack a complete land registry and a proper forest registry and maps, which, together with the inadequate implementation of laws prohibiting illegal building on burnt areas, constitutes a vacuum that leads to changes in land use and the reclassification of forested land for activities such as construction;
- J. whereas the Community Mechanism for Civil Protection and subsequently the Union Civil Protection Mechanism have been repeatedly activated in recent years;
- K. whereas natural disasters such as the increasingly frequent forest fires in southern Europe can also have a cross-border dimension owing to the speed with which they can spread from their original source and their ability to change direction unexpectedly, meaning that they require flexible, rapid, coordinated and multilateral response efforts; whereas such disasters can cause extensive damage to property, human life, economic activities and the regional environment;
- L. whereas Parliament has submitted successive resolutions since 1995 calling urgently for

various European Union initiatives to combat wildfires in southern Europe;

- M. whereas Parliament adopted the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Decision No 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism on 31 May 2018;
1. Expresses its sympathy and profound solidarity with the relatives of those who lost their lives and with the residents of the affected areas, and pays homage to the firefighters, soldiers, professionals and volunteers who have worked tirelessly and courageously to extinguish fires, rescue people and limit damage from this summer's natural disasters;
 2. Calls on the Commission to take all necessary steps to allow the swift and effective provision of funding, including reallocation of existing European Structural and Investment Funds, to address the damage and support the victims;
 3. Calls on the Commission to ensure that all available cohesion instruments and regional funds are effectively used for prevention activities as well as for territorial security, reconstruction and rehabilitation activities and all other necessary interventions, in full cooperation with the Greek national and regional authorities;
 4. Calls on the Commission to demonstrate flexibility in the light of this extraordinary and severe situation, given that Greece is the only Member State with a steadily declining GDP;
 5. Urges the Commission to support rehabilitation of the regions that have suffered heavy damage, restore the natural habitats in affected areas, seek to relaunch job creation and take appropriate measures to compensate for the social costs inherent in the loss of jobs and other sources of income;
 6. Deeply regrets the fact that so many and such heavy losses were also sustained in certain other Member States recently affected by fires of similar magnitude; considers it necessary, in consequence, to examine the adequacy of prevention and preparedness measures to ensure that the necessary lessons are learned, with a view to preventing and limiting the devastating effects of similar disasters in Member States in the future;
 7. Deplores the fact that so many of these forest fires appear to have been started by acts of arson, and is particularly concerned that criminal acts of this kind are increasingly to blame for forest fires in Europe; calls on the Member States, therefore, to strengthen and make use of penal sanctions for criminal acts that damage the environment, and in particular for those causing forest fires, and believes that prompt and effective investigations to establish liability, followed by proportionate punishment, would discourage negligent and deliberate behaviour;
 8. Calls for more efficient methods for the early detection of forest fires, and better transfer of expertise on fire suppression measures among the Member States, and urges the Commission to improve the exchange of experience among the regions and Member States;
 9. Acknowledges the solidarity shown by the European Union, its Member States and other countries in assisting the affected regions during forest fire emergencies with the

supply of aircraft, firefighting equipment and expertise, as well as the commendable assistance given to the relevant authorities and rescue teams;

10. Stresses the need to speed up the procedure for accessing EU funds for the recovery of agricultural land following fires, and for more financial aid to be made available for the development of firebreaks; stresses the fatal effects of forest fires on animals and livestock;
11. Considers it essential to take into account the structural problems of the rural environment (demographic decline, abandonment of farmland, deforestation);
12. Calls on the Commission to make progress in devising information and education campaigns on the prevention measures agreed with the Member States with a view to reducing the risks and consequences of natural disasters, especially in the areas of highest risk, by making the public aware of the need to care for the environment and conserve natural resources; urges the Commission and the Member States to take measures, including measures to raise public awareness, in support of more sustainable use of water, soil and biological resources, and also better waste management, the lack of which is often the cause of fires;
13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Committee of the Regions, the governments of the Member States and the regional authorities of the areas affected by the fires.