



**Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée Parlementaire Euro-Latino Américaine
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EURO-LATIN AMERICAN PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

**Committee on Social Affairs, Human Exchanges, the Environment,
Education and Culture**

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PROVISIONAL

DRAFT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

Prevention of natural disasters in Europe and Latin America

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Disaster prevention

The Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly,

- having regard to the statements issued at the six summits of the heads of state and government of Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union, held respectively in Rio de Janeiro (28 and 29 June 1999), Madrid (17 and 18 May 2002), Guadalajara (28 and 29 May 2004), Vienna (11 and 13 May 2006), Lima (15 and 17 May 2008) and Madrid (18 May 2010),
- having regard to the Commission communication: '*A Community approach on the prevention of natural and man made disasters*' (2009/2151(INI)),
- having regard to the European Parliament's resolution of 21 September 2010 on the Commission communication: '*A Community approach on the prevention of natural and manmade disasters*' (2009/2151(INI)),
- having regard to the communication from the European Commission to the European Council and the European Parliament: '*Towards a stronger European disaster response: the role of civil protection and humanitarian assistance*' (2011/2023(INI)),
- having regard to the resolutions of 27 September 2011 '*towards a stronger European disaster response: the role of civil protection and humanitarian assistance*'; of 11 March 2010 on the major natural disasters in the autonomous region of Madeira and the effects of the storm 'Xynthia' in Europe; of 16 September 2009 on forest fires in the summer of 2009; of 4 September 2007 on natural disasters; of 7 September 2006 on forest fires and floods; of 18 May 2006 on natural disasters (forest fires, droughts and floods) – agricultural aspects, regional development aspects and environmental aspects; of 5 September 2002 on floods in Europe; of 14 April 2005 on the drought in Portugal; of 12 May 2005 on the drought in Spain; of 8 September 2005 on natural disasters (fires and floods) in Europe,
- having regard to the legislative resolution of 18 May 2006 on the draft regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Solidarity Fund,
- having regard to the Commission's working document: '*Implementation plan for the EU strategy for supporting Disaster Risk Reduction in developing countries 2011-2014*' (SEC (2011) 215 final),
- having regard to the ISDR/UN 2011 global assessment report on disaster risk reduction: '*Revealing risk, redefining development*',
- having regard to the regional progress report on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in the Americas, 2009, OAS/UNISDR,
- having regard to the regional progress report on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action (2009-2011), OAS/UNISDR,
- having regard to the World Bank report '*Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation in Europe and Central Asia*', 2010, World Bank Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery,
- having regard to Article 16 of its Rules of Procedure,

- A. whereas some 200 million people have been affected by natural disasters over the last few decades,
- B. whereas the risk of death associated with natural disasters is diminishing worldwide, while the figures for at-risk populations and economic losses continue to increase exponentially, particularly in low to middle-income countries and regions with poor governance,
- C. whereas climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of natural disasters, which often affect more than one State and cause serious economic, environmental and social problems,
- D. whereas the risks associated with natural disasters increase in proportion to the degree of vulnerability to them, which in turn is intrinsically linked to the working of institutional structures, and, in particular, to the risk-awareness and information system, the priority given to disaster risk management strategies in national policies and budgets, urban planning and management of natural ecosystems,
- E. whereas the scale of possible future losses, calculated on the basis of disaster-related losses, effects and risks, can be used as a key indicator for reaching decisions on public investment in this sphere, and it would also be more worthwhile for governments to reduce risk through a combination of preventive and corrective measures than to absorb possible annual losses,
- F. whereas natural disasters have a major medium and long-term impact in terms of education, health, structural poverty and population displacement; whereas children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of natural disasters and there is a clearly-established connection between disasters and lower levels of school enrolment, and there has also been shown to be a broad gender gap when it comes to completing school after a disaster has occurred,
- G. bearing in mind the rise in 'emerging risks' linked to the growing interdependence of technological systems such as telecommunications, financial services, transport, energy and water,
- H. whereas in order to reduce risks and mitigate the impact of natural disasters it is essential to strengthen regional and international cooperation in areas such as technology transfer, exchange of best practices, compiling information on risks, assistance in improving governance and capacity-building, as well as financial aid and creation of a 'multi-risk' protection system in order to better withstand different types of disaster,
- I. whereas the key to development lies in increasing our capacity to reduce the risk of natural disasters in order to counter the increased threat of such disasters to communities and economic goods; and whereas a degree of consensus has been reached on the need to systematically include risk-reduction when planning, drafting and implementing development policies,
- J. whereas the need for a more active approach, aimed at informing, motivating and

involving communities in risk-reduction strategies at local level has been widely recognised and the participation of civil society has been shown to have positive results for the implementation of new planning and urban development strategies,

- K. whereas the quality of governance and the degree of responsibility assumed at national and local level, together with social demand and accountability, have a direct impact on the scale of mortality and economic loss,
- L. whereas decisions relating to land-use and construction can have a major impact on risk levels, especially in large cities which include informal settlements,
- M. whereas ecosystems act as natural barriers to many extreme climate conditions, thereby offering an excellent solution in cost-benefit terms,
- N. whereas drought poses a hidden risk, due to the global underestimation of drought-risk patterns and trends; with the most visible impact of drought being on agriculture, with the result that its consequences are most strongly felt at local level by the rural poor who depend on farming for their survival,
- O. bearing in mind the importance of woodland in preventing drought, fire and desertification,
- P. whereas although instruments of social protection such as economic aid and seasonal work programmes are unable to reduce actual risks, they can help strengthen the capacity to withstand natural disaster, reduce poverty and encourage the development of human capital at little additional cost,
- Q. whereas Latin America, and to a lesser extent Europe, has become increasingly prone to extreme natural weather and geological phenomena such as hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, drought, storms and volcanic eruptions,
- R. whereas according to data from the Organisation of American States (OAS), although Latin America has made considerable headway in terms of preparation, response and assistance, its success in limiting the vulnerability and risks associated with development processes has been limited,
- S. whereas the subregions of Latin America are able to influence national policies through the various bodies set up by the subregional organisations, such as the Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Assistance, the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Centre for Information on Natural Disasters, the Regional Centre for Natural Disaster Prevention in Central America and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency,
- T. bearing in mind the importance of the new solidarity clause included under Article 222 of the TFEU to ensure the mobilisation of all forms of assistance and effective coordination amongst Member States in the event of a natural or manmade disaster,
- 1. Stresses that, given that natural disasters can severely affect the social and economic development of countries in the short, medium and long term, the overall aim of risk

prevention, reduction and correction is to minimise the loss of life, economic goods, infrastructure, housing and communications and to safeguard the human and basic rights of those affected;

2. Recommends, given the cross-border nature of natural disasters, full cooperation to prevent and mitigate their impact, particularly through the exchange of best practices and risk information, the creation and distribution of fully catalogued lists of potential risks, development of capacity-building programmes, technology transfer, financial aid, the strengthening of governance, particularly in organisational, legal and political terms, and the improvement of early-warning systems;
3. Stresses the need to create a new paradigm incorporating disaster risk prevention in development policies, in order to reduce the cost of natural disasters;
4. Calls on governments to take natural disaster risk management policies and climate change adaptation into account when deciding how to invest in development, in order to ensure that public policies aimed at the various development sectors are coherent and that risk management is included in national development strategies;
5. Urges governments to include risk reduction when planning public investment, urban developments, environmental planning and management and to allocate sufficient funding for this purpose in their budgets;
6. Recommends the creation of a Biregional Centre for Disaster Prevention, in charge of designing common strategies and an emergency early-warning system in order to reduce our regions' shared vulnerability to disasters resulting from climate or technological change;
7. Considers that investment in the prevention of specific risks is needed in order to reduce the repercussions of natural disasters, while at the same time increasing the adaptability of countries; recommends that governments use loss calculation assessment and probability models as the basis for deciding their budgets for public spending on risk management; recommends that they urgently address those risks which can be most effectively reduced and in doing so produce positive economic, social and environmental results;
8. Is in favour of risk management based on the principle of subsidiarity with a gradual decentralisation of powers; considers that central governments should continue to be mainly responsible for technical, financial and legal assistance and should provide support to local governments in the event of larger-scale disasters which cannot be handled at local level;
9. Stresses the importance of strengthening horizontal cooperation (between different bodies at the same hierarchical level) and vertical cooperation (between bodies at different hierarchical levels) amongst the various government and non-government bodies and of providing local governments with adequate budgets with which to implement risk management strategies at local level;
10. Calls on governments to involve representatives of civil society and academics, particularly from the R&D sector, in the design of risk-management strategies and

policies in order to improve their dissemination, planning and implementation, as well as to build consensus;

11. Sees a need to include a gender dimension in disaster risk reduction and to take steps to enhance public awareness of risks, as a key factor in improving the implementation of risk-management strategies;
12. Urges governments to remove all barriers impeding access to information, particularly information about disaster risks, in order to establish responsibilities, which can in turn help to improve the efficiency of governance;
13. Proposes that suitable steps should be taken to reduce the inequalities between the various regions and subregions in terms of their ability to protect their populations and economic assets and their capacity to react and recover from the impact of natural disasters; highlights the need to pay special attention to disadvantaged areas and regions and/or those which are geographically complicated, such as islands and mountainous, outlying, frontier or scarcely-populated regions;
14. Considers that governments should take steps to transfer certain risks, through the use of insurance systems, to create a degree of protection in the event of major losses beyond their capacity to absorb and to anticipate and prepare themselves to reduce the impact of emerging risks;
15. Considers that the development of insurance systems and a risk-based approach can play a vital role in reducing the cost of reconstruction and its budgetary impact;
16. Considers it highly important to strengthen the emergency services' technical capacities, and guarantee the effectiveness of emergency information and communication systems and the availability of rapid response tools;
17. Urges governments to include social protection measures in their risk management strategies, such as social allowances and microcredits, as these can help soften the immediate impact of a disaster on the most vulnerable groups and prevent the interruption of children's schooling or the sale of production assets, with positive medium and long-term effects;
18. Considers it fundamentally important to protect children and their needs in terms of education, food and health, particularly in the case of very young children, who are the most immediately affected by any natural disaster;
19. Calls on countries to give special consideration to asylum requests from people displaced by natural disasters and/or environmental problems and to make every effort to ensure their resettlement;
20. Urges governments to develop active planning and land-use systems able to guarantee the protection of ecosystems, adaptation to climate change and use of construction methods designed to withstand the risk of natural disasters;
21. Emphasises that building laws, regulations, standards and criteria must be adapted to each country's specific situation, as well as to local needs and the extent to which it is

possible to comply with such rules, and therefore considers it important to involve communities in decision making; the participation of civil society encourages the adoption of new approaches to help reduce risks and also has wider advantages in terms of promoting constructive citizenship and greater social cohesion;

22. Calls for greater emphasis to be placed on the development of ecosystem-based risk management strategies, which can provide highly attractive solutions in cost-benefit terms and allow a range of disaster risks, such as floods, drought and fires, to be addressed;
23. In order to tackle drought, recommends that governments include drought risk management as a core element of their risk governance and, in particular, that they identify and address the root causes of drought and adopt measures to improve soil and water management systems, that they provide support to the poorest rural families who rely on farming and improve early-warning and response systems;
24. Calls for support to be given to farming activities in rural areas which have been abandoned due to the development of industrial sectors and which are becoming more and more exposed to the risk of natural disasters; recalls that the upkeep of rural areas helps to prevent their desertification and impoverishment and preserve their ecosystems;
25. Points out that, given the importance of woodland in preventing erosion and flooding, maintaining biodiversity, managing underground water resources and capturing carbon, it is important to adopt and use measures to prevent deforestation, illegal logging and forest fires; supports a firm policy of reforestation, preferably with native species and mixed forests, to create better defences against fire, disease and storms;

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26. Instructs its Co-Presidents to forward this resolution to the Council of the European Union and the European Commission, the parliaments of the EU Member States and of all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Latin American Parliament, the Central American Parliament, the Andean Parliament, the Mercosur Parliament, the Office of the Secretary-General of the Andean Community, the Commission of Permanent Representatives of Mercosur, the Office of the Permanent Secretary of the Latin American Economic System, and the Secretaries-General of NATO, the OAS, UNASUR and the United Nations.