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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to the Council and Commission statements

pursuant to Rule 37(2) of the Rules of Procedure

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on behalf of the ELDR Group

on floods in central Europe

European Parliament resolution on floods in central Europe

The European Parliament,

- A. whereas several Member States and candidate countries in central Europe have been severely affected by floods, most notably Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia,
 - B. whereas the damage caused by the extensive flooding cannot yet be specified in detail in terms of financial needs, but will certainly require financial assistance of several billion euro for humanitarian needs and reconstruction,
 - C. whereas it is imperative that the EU shows its solidarity with the victims of these disastrous floods, also in term of financial assistance,
 - D. whereas the amounts made available so far by the EU consist - for the time being - of redeployment or advancement of payments, but do not yet involve 'fresh money',
 - E. whereas this unprecedented flooding was not a unique case globally and whereas there were severe droughts in Italy at the same time,
 - F. whereas these kinds of natural disasters will become more frequent in Europe - and globally - as climate change gains momentum,
 - G. whereas the EU must take a leading role in the battle against climate change,
- 1. Expresses its solidarity with the victims of the horrendous floods in central Europe, and its sympathy with the families of those who perished;

As regards the Member States affected:

- 2. Welcomes the measures envisaged by the Commission for redeployment and anticipation of payments in agriculture, including the payment already in 2002 of direct aid programmed for the 2003 budget for which an amount of about € 500 million has been requested, as well as the reprogramming of Structural policy funds to redeploy assistance to the regions concerned;
- 3. Also welcomes the advancement of 50% of arable payments to farmers in southern Italy affected by persistent drought (at an estimated cost of € 300 million);
- 4. Is willing to consider the possibility of using the performance reserve of the Structural Funds (4% of the 2000-2006 envelope for each Member State) for the emergency measures concerning flood damage, and of amending the existing regulation to this end, if necessary;
- 5. Welcomes the announcement made by the European Investment Bank that it is ready

to provide significant amounts in long-term loans (30 years/5% interest rate starting after 7 years) on exceptional terms (covering 100% of project costs), to be used to finance the reconstruction of infrastructure and SMEs, which could for the current year amount to € 1 billion for the 4 countries concerned, and to loans of € 3 to 5 billion in total for the victims of the floods.

As regards the candidate states affected:

6. Welcomes the immediate use of up to € 48 million of unallocated ISPA funds for flood damage in the Czech Republic, and of several million for Slovakia, and the use of € 9.75 million under the PHARE programme for reconstruction projects in the regions concerned;
7. Emphasises that additional financial assistance must be provided through the emergency aid reserve, so as to demonstrate the EU's solidarity with the flood victims in the candidate states affected;

As regards the creation of a permanent instrument for assistance to victims of disasters in EU Member States

8. Is willing to consider the creation of a new permanent instrument, European Relief Fund, either in the form of a new flexibility instrument, or in the form of a new reserve (heading 6 of the Financial Perspective), provided that a solid legal base is established, with clear and unequivocal criteria as to when and how the appropriations from the instrument can be used for a Europe-wide disaster;
9. Believes that one criterion should be the size of the damage in relation to the size of a country's economy, and another that the Member State affected has done all that was possible to prevent the disaster from occurring;
10. Points out that the creation of the European Relief Fund, which can only act as a complement to the insurance industry, should not create overestimated expectations, as the size of EU financial assistance in case of Europe-wide disasters will inevitably always be limited, even if a new instrument in the order of € 500 million to € 1 billion is established;
11. Urges the Commission to present its proposals both for the new financial instrument and for the legal base forthwith;

As regards the environmental aspects of the floods disaster

12. Believes that if European funding is made available to address the consequences of natural disasters, the EU will also have to be involved in the development of preventive measures;
13. Urges the Member States to preserve or re-create the flood plains of rivers, if repetition of the current disastrous floods is to be avoided;
14. Urges the EU to create a genuine strong Common Environmental Policy;
15. Challenges the US administration, in view of the positions taken at the Johannesburg Conference on sustainable development, to recognise the evidence for climate change and the necessity for all nations to work together in reducing the prejudicial effects of economic development on the global environment;

16. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments of the Member States affected and the governments of the Czech Republic and Slovakia.