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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to the Commission statement

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

by Frédérique Ries and Joan Vallvé

on behalf of the ELDR Group

on the effects of the summer heat wave

European Parliament resolution on the effects of the summer heatwave

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the recent very high temperatures throughout Europe and across the world,
- having regard, in particular, to the drought and associated forest fires which have occurred in Europe,
- having regard also to recent forest fires in Canada, the United States, Russia, and South Africa,
- A. whereas exceptional weather conditions brought unusually high temperatures to many parts of Europe, as well as elsewhere in the world,
- B. whereas these recent high temperatures have claimed the lives of an as yet uncalculated number of people throughout Europe, have led to the evacuation of many people from their homes, have left some people jobless or homeless, and had a devastating effect on farming, forestry and tourism in many countries, as well as adverse effects on the provision of core services such as transport, electricity, and water,
- C. whereas forest fires in Portugal alone have destroyed 356 000 hectares of woodland and a total of around 5% of the country's territory, inflicting damage with an estimated cost of over €1 billion,
- D. whereas the extreme heat led to the deaths of many old and frail people, particularly in France, where up to 10,000 people are thought to have died, while Portuguese estimates put the figure at approximately 1300 deaths,
- E. whereas it is to be feared that, as a result of an emerging pattern of climate change, natural disasters on this scale are likely to recur,
- F. whereas forest fires are a recurring problem - even during normal summers - in the Mediterranean region,
- 1. Expresses its sympathy to and solidarity with the families of those who died during the heat wave;
- 2. Expresses its admiration and heartfelt gratitude to the emergency services and volunteers who have helped to bring the forest fires under control;
- 3. Calls on the medical authorities in the various Member States to evaluate now the kind

of preventative or emergency action that should be taken in any similar climatic situation that may occur in the future;

4. Strongly condemns the criminal actions of those individuals responsible for starting certain of these fires deliberately, and calls on Member States to make every possible effort to ensure that they are brought to justice;
5. Notes that, according to the European Forest Fires Information System (EFFIS), only 5% of this summer's forest fires were due to natural causes; considers that all Member States affected need urgently to review their systems for providing information to the general public on preventing forest fires, and to review penalties applied to people who start fires deliberately;
6. Points to the fact that some €23.5 million has been spent in EU research on forest fires through programmes such as the SPREAD project which focuses on an integrated forest fire management system for Europe; considers that this investment has proven its worth during the current emergency - for example, the use of a mobile watch tower developed by SPREAD in some of the major fires in Central Portugal;
7. Welcomes the coordinating role played in responding to the states of emergency in France and Portugal by the EU's Rapid Response Centre; considers that the Centre's resources must henceforth be supplemented by the establishment of a European Civil Protection Force, and calls on the Commission and the Council to address this issue as a matter of urgency;
8. Calls on the Member States to cooperate with the Commission to draw up a detailed inventory of equipment available throughout the EU to deal with such emergencies, in order that the Commission can assess these resources in the light of potential future needs, and if necessary, make proposals to address any shortfalls;
9. Welcomes the proposal of the European Commission to grant €31.6 million from the EU Solidarity Fund to Portugal, to help deal with the damage caused by forest fires;
10. Welcomes the decision by the Commission to bring forward the payment of some CAP direct support to farmers in order to ease the burden of the drought on the agricultural sector;
11. Calls on the Member States concerned to adapt their rural development programmes for the regions affected by forest fires, in order that more resources are allocated to fire prevention; asks the Commission to encourage this and to allow some flexibility in eventual programme modifications;
12. Interprets the recent extreme weather conditions as further evidence of the negative effects of climate change; considers that the European Union must redouble its efforts to tackle this issue, in particular by taking concerted action to cut emissions in the field of transport; calls on recalcitrant third countries to acknowledge once and for all that climate change has to be tackled at both the national and global level;

13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, and the governments of the Member States and accession countries.