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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 103(2) of the Rules of Procedure

by Zbigniew Krzysztof Kuźmiuk, Sebastiano (Nello) Musumeci, Zdzisław Zbigniew Podkański and Janusz Wojciechowski

on behalf of the UEN Group

on recent devastating forest fires, droughts and floods in the European Union Member States

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European Parliament resolution on recent devastating forest fires, droughts and floods in the European Union Member States

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 174 of the EC Treaty,
 - having regard to the Commission's Report No 21553 on climate change and the European water dimension,
 - having regard to the 'Forest Focus' regulation (Regulation (EC) No 2152/2003 of 17 November 2003),
 - having regard to the Commission's communication of 3 November 1998 on a Forestry Strategy for the European Union (COM(1998)0649),
 - having regard to the new European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD),
 - having regard to the Commission communication on the reaction capacity of the European Union in cases of disasters and crises,
 - having regard to its resolution of 14 April 2005 on the drought in Portugal,
 - having regard to its resolution of 12 May 2005 on the drought in Spain,
 - having regard to its resolution of 5 September 2005 on the fires and floods reported in summer 2005 in southern and central Europe,
 - having regard to its legislative resolution of 18 May 2006 on natural disasters (fires, drought and floods),
 - having regard to Rule 103(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas in the summer of 2006 the European Union Member States have been again hit by major forest fires, droughts and floods,
- B. whereas the forest fires led to the death of many people, injuries and considerable material damage,
- C. whereas the total area affected by the fires in the EU is more than 200 000 hectares, and in the period between 31 July and 14 August alone more than 64 500 ha were burnt; whereas apart from Spain and Portugal, which were the worst affected, there was an increase in fires in other Member States, such as Austria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden and the UK,
- D. whereas, as in previous years, continuous drought and extremely high temperatures have

not only led to the proliferation of forest fires in Europe, but also significantly affected the agriculture sector in numerous Member States, lowering crop yields and threatening the survival of millions of farms,

- E. whereas in Central Europe, particularly in Poland, a serious and protracted drought has been followed by torrential rains and floods,
 - F. whereas fires and droughts are usually a transnational phenomenon and there is therefore an urgent need to reinforce the joint Community measures for fighting natural disasters and providing efficient civil defence mechanisms,
 - G. whereas in Europe, civil defence against natural disasters comes under the responsibility of the Member States, which causes a lack of immediate and efficient coordination between them,
 - H. whereas the Brussels European Council of 15 and 16 June 2006 adopted the Presidency's report on reinforcing the Union's response capacities in cases of emergency and crisis,
 - I. whereas Parliament plans to develop its in-depth insight into national disasters with a public hearing on fires and floods to be held in October 2006,
1. Deplores the fact that the fires, floods and droughts in various EU countries in recent months have been among the most severe in living memory, resulting in devastation and loss of life;
 2. Expresses its condolences and solidarity to the families and friends of all those who have lost their lives in the recent forest fires and floods;
 3. Pays homage to the remarkable efforts of the firefighters and civilians who risked their lives to take part in the operations to extinguish the fires, often with very limited resources;
 4. Points out that the abovementioned phenomena have not been addressed so far by sufficient Community actions and measures, so that the damaged regions could receive additional financial and technical assistance;
 5. Is convinced that the present institutional weaknesses of the European Union in this field require that relevant human and technical measures should urgently be taken in order to assist fire fighting and civil defence in those Member States that encounter major fires, droughts or floods;
 6. Calls on the Commission to submit an overall and binding aid strategy to the Member States concerned and persons affected by the abovementioned disasters;
 7. Urges the Commission to develop all the existing forms of such aid;
 8. Calls on the Commission to prepare a proposal for a Europe-wide system to protect forests against fires;
 9. Urges that a European Civil Defence Agency - along the same lines as the successful US

Federal Emergency Management Agency - be set up with a view not only to coordinating the management of emergencies following natural disasters, but above all to be responsible for risk detection and prevention;

10. Considers that Volunteer Civil Protection Action should be promoted and supported without delay, with basic training activities and equipment that might harness advanced technologies, since this is one of the major resources available to the Member States when dealing with states of emergency arising from natural disasters;
11. Calls on the present Finnish Presidency to take into account the above recommendations and to take note of the relevant actions undertaken by the Commission;
12. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Governments of the EU Member States.