

P5_TA(2002)0193

Torrential rain in Tenerife and eastern Spain and climate change

European Parliament resolution on the torrential rain affecting Tenerife and the east coast of Spain and climate change

The European Parliament,

- A. having regard to the disaster which hit the municipality of Santa Cruz de Tenerife as a result of the floods on 31 March 2002, caused by a sudden downpour during which 224 litres of water per square metre fell in two hours,
- B. whereas as a result of the disaster people died, others disappeared, dozens were injured and unspeakable suffering was caused to a large proportion of the population, and at least 400 homes, according to initial estimates, were totally or partially destroyed, as was the property of thousands of families,
- C. having regard to the enormous material damage caused to the infrastructure of the city and the port facilities, essential for the normal activities of the island of Tenerife,
- D. whereas the storm also had disastrous consequences for the region of Valencia, especially the districts of Marina and La Safor, where one person was killed and flooding seriously affected homes in the area and destroyed many roads,
- E. whereas Santa Cruz de Tenerife benefits from measures implementing the improvements envisaged in the URBAN programme and a large proportion of the works carried out to implement these programmes were flattened by the floods,
- F. having regard to its previous resolutions on natural disasters of this kind, which are of particular significance in Mediterranean countries, because such phenomena happen only occasionally in geographical areas which are not prepared for heavy rain,
- G. concerned at the possible link between this kind of natural disaster and climate change, which is affecting the whole planet,
- H. concerned also at the impact which the building and provision of infrastructure is having on the ecosystems of small island regions with mountainous terrain,
 - 1. Conveys its condolences to the families affected by the loss of human life and expresses sympathy with the families of those who disappeared or were injured, and with the families who lost their homes and property;
 - 2. Calls on the Commission to contact the authorities of the Canary islands and the Spanish State in order to offer opportunities for aid to remedy the damage caused to the island's infrastructure;

3. Raises the efforts made by the various organisations involved, which were mobilised to assist the flood victims, especially the various teams of firemen, police, soldiers and voluntary organisations, as well as local, regional and national authorities, but takes the view that swift and effective coordination of civil protection services is needed throughout the European Union, in order to reduce the impact of this kind of natural disaster, which is becoming increasingly frequent;
4. Requests in particular, in the context of providing infrastructure in the outermost regions of the Union, that the Commission should take account of the impact of building work on the natural characteristics of island regions with a high population density, in order to ensure that natural events of this kind do not have disastrous consequences;
5. Considers that the torrential rain which affected Tenerife and eastern Spain are bound to increase the international community's concern about the phenomenon of climate change. Points out, in this context, that the European Union needs to pursue an ambitious and decisive policy to continue the Kyoto process, not least on an international scale; calls on the Member States to respect fully their commitments to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions; considers that the Kyoto Protocol is only the first stage in the fight against global warming and that additional measures will be needed in the long term;
6. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and the governments of the Member States.