



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN
ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA MEDITERRANEE
الجمعية البرلمانية للبحر الأبيض المتوسط

**2nd Standing Committee on Economic, Social
and Environmental Cooperation**

Special Task Force on Disaster Management

Disaster Management in the Mediterranean

Rapporteur: Hon. José Junqueiro (Portugal)

*Report endorsed by consensus by the 2nd Standing Committee
during its 4th meeting on 25 June 2009 in Lisbon*

I. PAM involvement on Disaster management issues

Following internal debate among members of the 2nd Standing Committee on recent catastrophes in Greece and Portugal, PAM delegates felt cooperation in civil protection matters had to be included in the PAM 2009 agenda. In order to launch a discussion on the subject, the PAM 2nd Standing Committee met in Malta on 18 September 2008. Parliamentarians heard Keynote speeches by **Dr. Agostino Miozzo**, Director of External Relations of the Italian Civil Protection and **Mr. Peter Cordina**, Director General of the Maltese Civil Protection.

Dr. Agostino Miozzo explained that the concept of risk perception had changed rapidly over the past decades and that today's good results in Italian civil protection were "the result of decades of mistakes". Dr. Miozzo mentioned that little resources were given to disaster preparedness. He considered that the challenge for the future of civil protection lies in relation to the coordination of available resources at the international level by combining national capacities to respond adequately to disaster events. He referred to the **FIRE 5 exercise** (Emergency Reaction Force in Europe) involving France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain as an example of coordinated regional protection. He also mentioned that another system was being tested in the framework of the Euromed partnership.

Mr. Peter Cordina (Maltese Civil Protection) spoke on the specific needs of the Maltese island and how Italy had been instrumental in helping towards the setting up of the Maltese civil protection services back in 2000. 70 volunteers dealt with problems relating to illegal immigration, flooding due to storm damage as well as traffic accidents. Malta was also a member of EU civil protection, Euromed and an associate member of FIRE 5. As such, its available resources consist of sea vessels, hazard vehicles, diving equipment, a control room and also a mobile control unit.

During the **debate** that followed, several delegations expressed the wish to reach enhanced cooperation between all the PAM States on civil protection matters (including on the FIRE 5 initiative) as well as to increase transfer of know-how from the North to the South.

At the meeting in Limassol (21 February 2009), the delegates had the privilege of hearing Mr. Jarraud, Secretary General of the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), Mr. Fabrizio Gentiloni (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)), as well as Mr. Christos Kyriakides, Cyprus Civil Defence Commissioner.

Mr. Jarraud highlighted the importance of communicating to the general public, and to politicians, especially parliamentarians, as quite often meteorologists/climatologists used a very specialized vocabulary and worked in a closed circle. He stressed that now scientists had agreed that global warming was due (99%) to human activity. Global warming would result in a rise in temperatures, and therefore a rise in the number of droughts, rising sea levels, and changes in winds and precipitation. Thus, in the future we would have less water, diminishing assurances of food security, migration due to environmental reasons would be more frequent. There would also be greater health risks as well as natural disasters. The risks of conflicts arising from access to natural resources, notably water, would also be greater. The WMO was working on observing the climate, pursuing research with the aid of regional climate, and assisting national meteorologists, including through job training. From 31 August to 4 September 2009, the 3rd World Climate Conference would be held in Geneva. He hoped that PAM could be represented at this conference.

Mr. Gentiloni, Chief, External Relations and Support Mobilisation Branch, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA, Geneva), said that his humanitarian work had become increasingly complex because it was necessary to coordinate greater numbers of actors. In the Mediterranean, OCHA was present in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and in Jerusalem. At the moment, OCHA was considering the possibility of transferring its Office in Dubai to Cairo. He explained that the UN Resident Coordinator was the first person contacted in the case of a catastrophe. A disaster declaration would then be made public, followed by a request for aid. A request for funds was then immediately made public. Between 2000 and 2009, of the PAM member countries, OCHA had been operational in Albania, Algeria, Morocco, Syria and Gaza.

Christos Kyriakides, Cyprus Civil Defence Commissioner, took the floor and explained the structure and activities of the Cyprus Civil Defence. Its main tasks were to come to the aid of populations during fires, to do rescues at sea and to give first aid. The Civil Defence had also established a surveillance system in the districts to ensure that the elderly and isolated were doing well. The Civil Defence had put into place an alarm system in order to warn the population in case of danger. In case of armed conflict, the priority was the protection of the population. The Cyprus Civil Defence was collaborating with its European counterparts, and in 2004 it received INSARAG certification. It had also participated in missions in Indonesia, in Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Greece. He said that during the crisis in Lebanon during the summer of 2006, Cyprus had welcomed 60,000 people in less than a month.

Hon. Rudy Salles, PAM President, had addressed the opening ceremony of the 6th Dubai International Humanitarian Aid and Development Conference. He informed the participants of

activities undertaken by PAM in the field of crisis management within the framework of the Special Task Force on this issue. There he met Ms. Margareta Wahlström, Under-Secretary-General and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). At DIHAD, President Salles gave a PAM plaque to Mr. Gerhard Putman-Cramer, Chief of the Emergency Services Branch of OCHA in recognition of his work in promoting a culture of disaster preparedness and in assisting in the setting up of international mechanisms to manage disasters in the Mediterranean countries.

II. Who are the players involved in crisis management in the Mediterranean region?

A/ International actors and mechanisms

The United Nations received an overall coordination mandate by the UN General Assembly (UNGA A/RES/846/182 and following) to assist all Member States to cooperate with in case of disasters and emergency.

- UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (**OCHA**) and more specifically:
- UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (**UNDAC**) – stand-by team of professionals and UN officials that can be deployed within hours of a disaster to carry out rapid assessment of priority needs
- International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (**INSARAG**) – Global network of disaster response organisations under UN umbrella, carries out annual Urban Search And Rescue (USAR) exercises, **INSARAG guidelines** have been endorsed by the **UN General Assembly** (UNGA A/RES/ 57/150 of 16 Dec 2002)
- **Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit** , UN mechanism to mobilize and coordinate emergency assistance to countries affected by environmental emergencies and natural disaster
- Logistics Support Unit (**LSU**) is part of the Emergency Services Branch (**ESB**) within OCHA and is responsible for managing stockpile of relief items that can be quickly dispatched
- UN Humanitarian Civil-military Coordination (**UN CMCoord**) is a platform for cooperation between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies set up under the Civil Military Coordination section (**CMCS**) of OCHA. Two sets of guidelines are in place, one for emergencies in times of peace and one for emergencies in times of war.
- The UN development programme (**UNDP**) is also involved, generally as the UNDP Resident coordinator acts focal point of all UN activities in a country facing disaster.

B/ Regional Actors

- The European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office (**ECHO**) – on funding in non EU countries
- The European Commission's **Civil Protection Mechanism** (under which the FIRE 5 mechanism is set up) – on intervention on the territory of the EU and in third countries

- Monitoring and Information Centre (**MIC**) clearing house of the European Commission's Civil Protection Mechanism
- **Euromed** Programme on the Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Natural and Man-made Disasters Programme (PPRD – between the EC and Mediterranean countries including Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Palestinian authorities, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey)
- **Union for the Mediterranean** has plans to address disaster management mechanisms in the Mediterranean region
- COE, EUR-OPA, open partial Agreement
- NATO, Euroatlantic disasters coordination concept

C/ Other actors and initiatives

- UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (**UNISDR**)
- Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System (**GDAS**) is a web-based platform that provides near real time alerts about natural disasters around the world and tools to facilitate response coordination, including media monitoring, map catalogues and Virtual on-site operations coordination centre
- International Red Cross and red Crescent Societies (**IFRC**)
- Earthquakes and Megacities Initiative
- World Congress on Disaster Reduction

III. Current challenges

The level of preparedness of PAM members to disasters varies greatly in our region. In terms of coordination and mutual assistance of PAM members, this also depends on bilateral agreements and whether PAM members are – or not - EU Member States or have benefited from UN and/or EU programmes such as assistance to 3rd countries or the PPRD.

Recent reports however point at the **overall lack of effective and efficient coordination mechanisms between national, regional and international actors**. Calls for enhanced consultations with UN bodies such as OCHA have been placed so as to increase synergies of all expert bodies dealing with rapid response to disasters.

Political will has been highlighted to be a key factor that will drive coordination and the level of preparedness in the future.

IV. What can parliamentarians do?

At national level:

- Request the national authorities to provide briefings in the presence of national & international experts about current state of preparedness in their own country and addressing the following:

- ✓ Which body/agency is the national focal point for civil protection at national level?
 - ✓ Which ministries are involved at national level (home affairs, justice, defence, foreign affairs...) and who coordinates?
 - ✓ Are local governments/communities involved?
 - ✓ Do we have a database of existing capacities and assets that could be deployed for national and international relief operations? Do we share it with the UN?
 - ✓ Do we have start-up emergency funds in the event of a disaster? Who is authorized to use it?
 - ✓ Who is the focal point for collection/disbursement of aid coming from foreign donors (NGOS, RC/RC, IFRC, individuals, businesses, donations)?
 - ✓ When shall military be deployed? Do we have clear guidelines at national level (cf Oslo Guidelines)?
 - ✓ What is the existing coordination mechanism between military & civil and between national & international actors?
 - ✓ What bilateral agreement has my country signed with other countries in the event of a disaster (including on customs)?
 - ✓ What training does the staff involved in disaster management receive?
 - ✓ Do we conduct simulation exercises (with foreign teams)?
 - ✓ Who is in charge of Risk mapping, Risk prevention and Risk reduction at national level?
 - ✓ Do we have access to the technology that enables disaster prediction and life savings?
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- National authorities to regularly brief PAM on the different types of risks at national level
 - Identify strengths and weaknesses at national level
 - Raise awareness among civil society about current situation (areas at risk, safety concerns, protection of cultural heritage sites ...)
 - Prepare legislation aiming at improving current situation, including requesting adequate resources (financial & personnel) for early warning and early response to disasters

At regional/International level:

- Raise awareness of situation at national level through participation to regional/international meetings on disaster management
- Home parliament to organise regional seminar on matter in order to exchange knowledge and best practices with all PAM States and Raise awareness of existing (if any) regional cooperation mechanisms / raise awareness about the strengthening of such mechanisms.