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**Report on Survey on Centres of Excellence for Disaster Risk  
Reduction in Africa**

**Fourth Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction Arusha,**

**United republic of Tanzania February 13-15, 2013**

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## 1. Background and Introduction

During the 1<sup>st</sup> African Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in December 2005, in Addis Ababa, the Arab Republic of Egypt submitted a proposal to create a Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre. The Ministers considered the report and commended Egypt for the initiative. While agreeing in principle to the creation of a continental centre, the Ministers suggested further the need to establish sub-regional and national disaster risk reduction and management centres. To this end, they requested the 'African Union Commission, in collaboration with Egypt, to convene an Experts' Meeting of Member States to undertake further analysis and define working modalities.' (EX CL 228). This was further endorsed by the AU Executive Council in Khartoum in January 2006.

To implement the Ministerial mandate, the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Economy directed that an Expert Group comprised of representatives from UNISDR, the AUC and Partners should visit both Egypt and Nairobi and report their findings to the 2nd Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. At the time, Nairobi was already hosting a Regional Disaster Management Centre of Excellence supported by 11 countries. However, due to resource constraints the proposed study tour was postponed. Following the request by Egypt, UNISDR and the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime transport had jointly launched a Regional Centre for DRR Training and Research, under the patronage of the Chair of the Executive Bureau of the Council of Arab Ministers responsible for the Environment (League of Arab States).

The Second Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Nairobi in October 2010 agreed on the Ministerial recommendation 3 'to call upon the AUC and Member States to create a network of capacity development institutions for training, research, information management and exchange at sub-regional and

regional levels in collaboration with international and regional partners'. With the support of UNISDR, draft criteria for the establishment of DRR Centres of Excellence were developed. (Annex 1) The Criteria for Centres of Excellence and the draft terms of reference were tabled for discussion at the meeting of the African Working Group held in Yaoundé in Cameroon in May, 2102. The African Working Group recommended that the AUC should translate these draft criteria and terms of reference into French, Arabic and Portuguese and send them to Regional Economic Communities for further consultations with their member states. This process is still ongoing.

## **2. Overview of Proposed Criteria for Centres of Excellence.**

### **2.1 Vision and Purpose**

The draft criteria for the creation of centres of excellence for disaster risk reduction initially envisaged the creation of one Regional Centre for Africa as well as sub-regional centres hosted by Regional Economic Communities to form a network of Centres of Excellence. However, views among stakeholders differed. Some supported a centralized model with sub-regional centres while others opted for a network of centres of excellence. Discussion continues to date.

The proposed purpose of the Centre of Excellence for DRR is 'to build safer more resilient communities through DRR for the attainment of sustainable development'. This purpose is similar to that which informs the vision for the African Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction. The centres are to have the responsibility for strengthening the disaster risk reduction institutions of RECs and Member States, by undertaking inter-disciplinary policy and applied research in disaster risk reduction, creating a network of knowledge management institutions linked as well with climate change, environment management and sustainable development as well promoting and facilitating the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into national and sector programmes.

#### a. Mission

The mission of the Regional Centre of Excellence and the network is:

- Identification, assessment and mapping of major natural hazards in Africa;
- Creation of awareness and enhancement of knowledge and skills;
- Development of institutional capacity for DRR;
- Development of networks for exchange of information, experience, expertise and early warning products; and
- Development, encouragement and promotion of home indigenous knowledge for disaster risk reduction.

#### b. Strategic Goals

The centres will be guided by the following strategic goals:

- Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction into national planning for development in all countries;
- Development of an Institutional framework for multi-hazard early warning, preparedness and response;
- Establishment and management of a multi hazard national early warning and response Network of Networks and promotion of partnerships for the exchange of experiences with other regional centers;
- Establishment of cooperation through the active application of International and Regional Protocols and Conventions for the mobilization of financial and technical assistance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Initiatives; and
- Enhancement of capacity-building at all levels in order to develop awareness to reduce vulnerability.

#### 2.4 Outputs

The planned outputs for the Regional Centre, which are viewed as complimenting and enhancing already existing mechanisms, institutions and frameworks, at the Regional and Sub-Regional levels should be.

- A system for comprehensive risk assessment and monitoring
- DRR mainstreaming and implementation
- A system for disaster response and recovery.
- A mechanism for rehabilitation and reconstruction

The draft document also outlines the governance and management structure, implementation strategy, funding arrangements and partnerships underpinning the centres.

## 2.5 Governance

The criteria proposes that The African Centre for Disaster Risk Reduction (ACDMS) will be governed by a ***Board of Trustees*** The Governments of each of the five sub-regions of Africa (North, South, East, West and Central) will elect their representative to the Board. In addition to the five members, each sub-region will elect the Chair of the Board of Trustees, appoint two international experts to join the Board, and invite two representatives from donor agencies. Only the five representatives have the right to vote, and decisions will be made according to majority rule. The Chair of the Board will cast his/her vote at the end of deliberations to finalize a decision. The Board of Trustees will meet once a year to review the report of the Centre on past year achievements, and approve the plan and budget for the coming year.

The rules and regulations governing the AUC will govern the Centre.

## 2.6 Current status

In May 2012, during a consultation between AUC and UNISDR in Addis, some proposals were made to move forward the process of identifying an African Centre of Excellence for DRR. First, it was agreed that the process needed to be inclusive, competitive and transparent. A competitive bidding process was proposed with invitations to submit proposals posted on the AUC website inviting interested organizations and institutions to submit their profiles and proposals. Secondly, it was agreed to establish an independent team of experts to evaluate the initial proposals to make a shortlist of institutions and organizations which would then be subject to a more rigorous assessment process. The expert team was to be composed as follows: 1) the Africa Development Bank, 2) ACMAD, 3) UNDP/BCPR, 4) an Africa expert academic and 5) the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, the AUC and UNISDR. The AUC was to lead this process and UNISDR was to support.

These proposals were endorsed by the Africa Working Group on DRR in Zanzibar in September, 2012. The African Working Group also endorsed the terms of reference and questionnaire inviting interested institutions and organizations involved in implementing DRR programmes to provide their profiles. (Annex 2)

The terms of reference were posted on the AUC website in the first week of October and 1 November 2012 was the deadline for submission. Responding to requests, the deadline was extended to November 15, 2012. Efforts were made to disseminate the information through representatives of RECS in the African Working Group. We also used the UNISDR network and other existing networks such as PeriperiU

### 3. Survey Responses

By the close of the extended deadline, 17 submissions were received. The sub-regional distribution per REC was as follows: EAC 4, ECCAS 0 ECOWAS 3, IGAD 4 and SADC 4. Of the 17 submissions, 2 were from francophone countries. In terms of institutional affiliation, 12 of the submissions were from Universities, 1 from a Consortium, 1 from an independent centre, 2 from NGOs, one local, the other international and 1 submission was received from a UN agency.

The submissions have since then been organized in a matrix. A meeting of the Expert Team was scheduled for December 19-21, 2012 in Addis Ababa, to review and assess the submissions and draw up a shortlist of institutions that could be approached for more detailed study and assessment. After the completion of the process, a final report and recommendations were to be submitted to the Africa Regional Platform and eventually to the Africa Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk reduction.

The meeting was, however, postponed due to the following:

3.1 The composition of the Expert Team that had been approved by the African Working Group to undertake the evaluation of submissions from Centres of Excellence is incomplete, as it did not include key AU departments. The AUC also pointed out the need for representation of RECs.

3.2 Due to limited resources, we were unable to invite the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, which had been selected as the external Centre of Excellence on DRR to participate in this preliminary assessment.

3.3 It was pointed out that criteria and a grading scheme needed to be developed in advance for assessing the Centres of Excellence

It was agreed to:

- 3.4 Seek guidance on the proper composition of the Expert team including its terms of reference;
- 3.5 Seek the guidance of an expert in the preparation of evaluation criteria and a grading scheme based on the parameters that were required for the submission and
- 3.6 Identify resources for carrying the process forward in 2013.

#### 4. **Key Issues and a proposed way forward**

- 4.1 The African Union Commission should provide some guidance on the composition Expert Team and consult further with UNISDR for the reconstitution of the Expert Team or, propose alternative mechanisms for proceeding with the assessment process;
- 4.2 The African Union Commission and UNISDR should facilitate the development of criteria for assessment and evaluation of the Centres;
- 4.3 Economic Communities should consult with their Member States and make recommendations on the criteria for Centres of Excellence, including in particular issues of the governance of the Centre, resource mobilization and sustainability for the Centre;
- 4.4 The reports and recommendations from the three processes should be tabled to the African Working Group
- 4.5 AUC should mobilize resources for carrying the process forward.