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Summary Report

The breakfast meeting was organised to identify with other Commission services some of the key issues that should be addressed in disaster management over the coming years. The discussion was also related to the forthcoming consultations on a post United Nations Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), a ten-year (2005-2015) voluntary framework on disaster risk reduction. Ms Margareta Wahlström, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, attended the meeting.

In her opening remarks, **Commissioner Georgieva** underlined the rising trend in the number of recorded disasters and the damage caused over recent decades. Developing countries are hardest hit in terms of mortality, but developed countries are also vulnerable. In the EU, the average loss from natural disasters is €10 billion. The floods that hit central Europe in 2002 (500 000 affected EU citizens) were a wake-up call to develop the EU disaster risk management and civil protection frameworks and the EU Solidarity Fund.

She emphasised the links between disaster management and sustainable economic development and the 400% to 700% return on investments in disaster prevention. She mentioned also the opportunities when it comes to developing the technologies that can improve our ability to anticipate and manage disasters.

The debate focused on ways to pursue and strengthen disaster risk management policies and activities as part of the EU growth and competitiveness agenda, and on the priorities to be addressed in the post 2015 Hyogo Framework for action, in synergies with the post 2015 development agenda and the follow-up to Rio+20.

Commissioner Potočnik underlined the economic consequences of disasters, besides their direct impacts, and the need to step up efforts on disaster prevention, with policies to enhance disaster proofing. He mentioned in particular:

- the need to reduce the impacts of natural disasters by adopting environmental friendly solutions such as green infrastructure, and promoting the sustainable management of water, forest and land resources;
- the work with all stakeholders over the years to improve the take-up of disaster prevention efforts in policy making (flood management, water and land planning, soil management and erosion);
- the need to build in a sustainable way to minimize damages from disasters (the revised Environmental Impact Assessment Directive will mainstream the concept of disaster and climate change proofing in all new project developments in Europe);

- the strengthened prevention provisions in the Seveso III Directive;
- the Environmental Liability regime in place within the EU, and the recently adopted legislation on off-shore oil and gas operations, extending the scope of the liability Directive to allow the European marine environment to be fully covered;
- a feasibility study on a "European Risk Sharing Facility" to address damage from industrial disasters;
- the need to strengthen our legislation where necessary to improve the uptake of risk prevention practices in industry, i.e. to make sure that if an accident happens the operator has the means to restore the damage, even if this entails high risk operators to prove their financial capacity or insurance cover, as in the off-shore Directive;
- the work in progress to address the nuclear liability insurance issue;
- the need to address disaster prevention as part of the follow-up to the Rio +20 and the post-2015 agenda;
- the need to strengthen and enhance the Hyogo Framework for Action, in particular the financing or risk sharing aspects and the promotion of insurance.

Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn mentioned the global nature of the disaster risk management challenge. She referred in particular to the Carnegie Group (G8+5) discussions, addressing science and technology policies for improving disaster anticipation and resilience. A meeting of Senior officials of the Carnegie Group countries, World Bank, and UN was convened by the JRC in December to discuss cooperation opportunities. This meeting stated a need for minimum standards, harmonised communication protocols, integration of social sciences into disaster management and multi-hazard partnerships. She referred in particular to concrete actions that should feed into the post 215 Hyogo process:

- the need to improve standards and data and for information sharing in the areas of disaster loss, disaster exposure, or communication of risks. The JRC is supporting DG ECHO by reviewing existing disaster loss databases and will provide recommendations for suitable EU minimum standards;
- the added value of international partnerships to assess in particular multi-hazard risks. The JRC is working with international stakeholders, including the World Bank, to establish a Global Floods Partnership, in order to facilitate exchange of best practices and foster new techniques;
- the work on the humanitarian risk index, conducted by DG ECHO and the JRC with international organisations and stakeholders;
- the need to develop a culture of prevention and preparedness to build a "risk society" including community education, risk awareness or engagement of citizens in protective response actions;
- the need to further advance cooperation and policy dialogue between the scientific and disaster risk management communities.

Commissioner Hedegaard referred to the EU strategy on adaptation to climate change (adopted on 16 April). The strategy is

- promoting action by Member States and encouraging them to adopt comprehensive adaptation strategies (currently 15 have strategies);
- encouraging climate mainstreaming in key sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, financial instruments (20 % of the overall spending, including on development, will be climate related) ensuring that Europe's infrastructure is made more resilient;
- addressing gaps in knowledge about adaptation (with specific guidelines) and further developing the European climate adaptation platform (Climate-ADAPT).

Referring to the post Hyogo discussions, she emphasized

- the opportunity to further integrate adaptation into disaster risk reduction efforts within the post Hyogo Framework;
- the need to mainstream adaptation and disaster risk reduction together in policies and financial instruments;
- the need to promote insurance and other financial products – the Green Paper on insurance of natural and man-made disasters is a welcomed initiative to engage with the sector and further elaborate on future initiatives.
- the need to promote further the economic case/ cost benefit of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

Commissioner Barnier emphasized

- that mainstreaming is key to create a culture of prevention (the prevention costs are lower than those for repairing);
- the role of the European Union Solidarity Fund, created after the serious flooding in central Europe in August 2002, and the need to act before a disaster strikes
- the importance of working on insurance issues - the Green Paper on the insurance of natural and man-made disasters (adopted on 16/04), will launch a consultation until 30 June 2013 on the availability and adequacy of appropriate disaster insurance;
- that the Green Paper process will also help to promote insurance as a tool of disaster management.

Commissioner Piebalgs mentioned:

- the need to find synergies with other parallel international processes (SDGs and post MDGs): disaster risk reduction needs to be considered in the sustainability goals to be developed;
- The significant progress made by the EU in building up the resilience of vulnerable populations, notably in the Sahel (AGIR) or Horn of Africa Region (SHARE);

- The development of the EU approach to resilience (Communication and action plan) to improve the effectiveness of the EU's humanitarian aid and development cooperation policies in reducing vulnerability in disaster prone countries and incorporating disaster risk reduction;
- the need to mainstream disaster risk reduction and resilience in the next programming;
- the support to disaster risk reduction through the natural disaster facility (€192 million under the 9th and 10th EDF, allowing interventions in more than 40 countries);
- the Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA) addressing disaster risk reduction in seven national programmes and two regional programmes;
- the importance of risk analysis, across borders in Europe but also across neighbourhood and candidate countries;
- the need to overcome the national reluctance of sharing capabilities;
- the need to further pursue and strengthen disaster risk management policies and activities as part of the EU growth and competitiveness agenda.

Margareta Wahlström underlined that:

- the forthcoming Global Platform of disaster risk reduction will focus on the importance of financing for disaster risk reduction (insurance, investment incentives, credit availability, etc...);
- risk assessment entails an obligation to act and should therefore be combined with capacity-building;
- there is a need to consider major industrial risks and cross-border risks (water/floods);
- there is a need to develop an integrated approach to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation;
- disaster risk reduction should be a key component of the post 2015 development agenda;
- there is a need to engage with the private sector (including insurance) in encouraging investments on disaster risk reduction and resilience building and infrastructure
- more research is needed on future risks/upcoming challenges;
- the United Nations have prepared an action plan of disaster risk reduction for resilience aiming to position the work of the UN.

In her concluding remarks, **Commissioner Georgieva** emphasised the need for the Commission to work with Member States in order to develop a common EU position in order to play a leading role in shaping an ambitious successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action. A Communication to be published at the end of the year will develop the Commission position.
