

The EU's Assembly of Regional and Local Representatives

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## UN and European Committee of the Regions join forces to reduce disaster risks

*Disaster in Italy highlights need for Europe's cities to become more resilient.*

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) and the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) have agreed a five-year action plan to support EU cities and regions to take more concerted action to in reducing the impact of natural disasters. It specifically wants to increase the number of towns and cities with disaster risk-reduction strategies by 2020.

The Action Plan, which was signed on [International Day for Disaster Reduction](#), seeks to translate the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 – a voluntary international approach to disaster-management policy and operations – into ideas for local and regional governments. The Action Plan upgrades a partnership between the CoR and the UNISDR that dates back to 2012.

"Did you know that 1.3 million people died in disasters over the past twenty years in storms, floods, heat waves, droughts, earthquakes and tsunamis?. Many could have been saved with better preparedness and early warning systems," said **Robert Glasser**, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk reduction.

**Markku Markkula**, President of the European Committee of the Regions, said: "We are signing this Action Plan, because – right here, right now – regions and cities across the EU are at risk. Cities are growing, the climate is changing, and we need to improve how we share knowledge – these are just other three reasons why we need to cooperate more."

The signing ceremony came seven weeks after an earthquake in central Italy killed almost 300 people.

"The recent tragic events in central Italy clearly show how important it is to build resilient communities," said **Adam Banaszak** (PL/ECR), who is currently drafting specific proposals on how local and regional authorities, working with the UNISDR and the EU, could assess, reduce, and respond to the risk of natural disasters. "We local and regional governments are on the frontline of disaster management. We deal with prevention, immediate responses and rescue operations. Natural disasters know no borders and therefore require coordinated efforts."

Mr Banaszak's report, which will add a local and regional perspective to work already done by the European Commission, is due for adoption in March 2017. In June 2014, the CoR contributed to deliberations about the Sendai Framework in a report written by **Harvey Siggs** (UK/ECR).

Cllr Siggs emphasised the importance of sharing knowledge, saying: "We need further collaboration and investment in information systems, and to work with the private sector so that disaster and disaster management data can be recorded, retrieved, analysed and used to plan for and mitigate the effects of future disasters."

#### Notes for editors:

1/ The **European Committee of the Regions** is the EU's assembly of regional and local representatives from all 28 Member States. Created in 1994, its mission is to involve regional and local authorities in the EU's decision-making process and to inform them about EU policies. The European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission consult the Committee in policy areas affecting regions and cities. Its 350 members and 350 alternates either hold an electoral mandate or are politically accountable to an elected assembly in their home regions and cities. Click [here](#) for more details on your national delegation.

2/ The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 is a non-binding agreement struck in Sendai, Japan, on 18 March 2015. Its aim is to reduce the number of disasters, by making cities more resilient. The Sendai Framework was preceded by the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015.

2/ On 13 October, the UNISDR published a report, "Poverty & Death: Disaster Mortality 1996-2015", that found that 7,056 disasters had killed 1.35 million people over twenty years, with 90% of deaths occurring in low- and middle-income countries. Earthquakes and tsunamis are the biggest killers overall, followed by climate-related disasters.

3/ In its opinion on a "Post-2015 Hyogo Framework for Action", whose rapporteur was Harvey Siggs (UK/ECR), the European Committee of the Regions called, among other suggestions, for more funds to meet civil-protection needs at the local and regional level, for an open data policy, for further collaboration and investment in information systems, and for further studies on the role of mobile technology, the internet and social media in communicating disaster information.

4/ **Live to Tell - International Day for Disaster Reduction**, held every 13 October, celebrates how people and communities around the world are reducing their exposure to disasters and raising awareness about the importance of reining in the risks that they face. The 2016 edition marks the launch of the new "Sendai Seven" campaign, centred on the seven targets of the Sendai Framework. The Sendai Seven Campaign is an opportunity for all, including governments, and local governments, to promote best practice at international, regional and national level across all sectors, to reduce disaster risk and disaster losses.

#### 5/ Other documents:

Statement: [Dealing with disasters: new global strategy must empower local and regional authorities](#)

CoR opinion: ['Post 2015 Hyogo Framework for Action'](#)

Study: [Implementation of the Sendai Framework at the EU level](#)

CoR opinion (pending): [Action Plan on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 - A disaster risk-informed approach for all EU policies](#)

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