

Statement of the Council of Europe to the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction [delivered by Eladio Fernández-Galiano, Executive Secretary of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA)].

The Council of Europe welcomes the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction as a major forum to forward and refine the implementation of the Hyogo Framework of Action for 2005-2015 and to exchange information and ideas on how to further reduce the vulnerability of societies to natural and technological hazards. Since its adoption at the 2005 World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Kobe, the Hyogo Framework of Action has served as a model and an inspiration to shape Council of Europe priorities and action in Disaster Risk Reduction.

At the 11th Ministerial Session of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) held in Marrakech (Morocco) in October 2006, the Ministers resolved to promote disaster reduction as a national political priority as it is recognised as a fundamental element of sustainable development. On the same occasion, the Ministers adopted a Medium Term Plan 2007-2011 built around the priorities of the Hyogo Framework of Action and adapted to the European and Mediterranean space, thus supporting the regional implementation of the Framework in its member states.

The Council of Europe, which celebrated its 60th anniversary in May 2009, reaffirms its goals to create and promote democratic societies throughout the whole continent, to ensure the respect for fundamental human rights, democracy and the rule of law and is devoted to finding common solutions to the challenges facing European society, among which the security and safety of its European citizens and the protection of everyone in the face of natural and technological hazards.

Given the concern of the Council of Europe for human development and safety, a Memorandum of Co-operation between ISDR and the Council of Europe was signed in Paris in April 2008. Its aim is to establish a working framework to organise and develop collaboration between both Organisations oriented towards achieving regional support for disaster risk reduction.

The Memorandum is already operative and a number of collaborative actions have been developed to reduce vulnerability: foster education and knowledge on disaster risk reduction; encourage risk mapping and early warning; promote national platforms and/or focal points as implementing tools of the Hyogo Framework for Action; disseminate achievements among countries. The EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement is also pleased to have been able to contribute to the preparation of the report "Implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action in Europe: Advancement and challenges".

The Council of Europe particularly welcomes the new orientations announced regarding the implementation of the Hyogo Framework of Action to include climate change as a major threat to the security of citizens and the need to include Disaster Risk Reduction in the adaptation agenda to be negotiated during coming Climate Change debates.

We congratulate the ISDR Secretariat for its positive input to the Conference and we wish it a great success.