

**Second session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction
16-19 June 2009, Geneva
A European Community strategy on disaster risk reduction
Intervention by the European Commission**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The European Commission is pleased to take part in the second session of the global platform for disaster risk reduction.

You have heard from the EU Presidency what the EU is doing on disaster risk reduction in developing countries. I would like to put the emphasis on action taken at European level for reducing the risks and the consequences of disasters mainly within the EU.

Citizens of the EU too face more frequent and often intense disasters.

These disasters often go along with huge economic damages.

Most of the time, these events do not occur within national borders and usually require a political response at all levels of government.

Member States and the European Community therefore need to combine their strengths to prevent disasters and their impacts and to ensure a rapid and effective European responses.

To this end, the Community civil protection Mechanism was created in 2001. It aims at supporting, and coordinating the Member States actions in preparing for and responding to disasters – both within the EU and outside. Thanks to this Mechanism, countries over the world can benefit from European assistance to reduce the consequences of disasters: this year for example the Mechanism contributed to the response provided to the Aquila earthquake in Italy and to the floods in Namibia and Tadjikistan. Last year

the Mechanism was involved in 20 events worldwide, including the dramatic earthquake in China and cyclone Nargis in Myanmar.

Another pillar of our strategy consists in a range of financial and legal instruments which aim at improving our knowledge about disasters and reducing their incidence.

Thus the EU has adopted a legislation on floods which provides a framework for mapping, assessing and mitigating the risks of floods everywhere in the EU.

We will now build on these experiences to address disaster prevention better in an integrated manner and take action in all areas where we can significantly contribute to disaster prevention at European level.

In this vein, the Commission adopted a Communication on the prevention of natural and man-made disasters in February.

This Communication which contributes to implement the Hyogo framework for action, has highlighted three key areas where actions at EU level could provide added value:

- First, we want to create the conditions for the development of knowledge based disaster prevention policies at all levels of government

- Second, we want to strengthen the link between actors and policies throughout the disaster management cycle, from prevention to preparedness, response and recovery.
- Finally, we want to ensure that prevention concerns are taken into account in a more consistent and efficient way across EU policies and programmes.

Over the coming months the Commission will work closely with Member States, other institutions, like ISDR, and stakeholders, to implement this strategy.

The following questions will have to be addressed in the coming months:

Do we know enough about vulnerability, risk assessment and about risk mapping?

How can we foster the dissemination of best practices and research results across the EU?

How can we reinforce the capacity of and links between early warning systems?

How can we make existing Community funding more efficient to support disaster prevention?

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Commission, together with the Member States of the EU, is committed to support the development of a consistent, and effective Community framework in the field of prevention.

By working together, we will better achieve our common goal to build a safer world.