



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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COASI 7
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NOTE

from : Presidency
dated : 18 January 2005
to : Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

Subject : Follow-up to the extraordinary meeting of the GAERC on 7 January 2005 on the earthquake and the tsunamis in the Indian Ocean
– Elements of an action plan

1. In the light of the initial Council and Coreper discussions and with a view to the Council debate on 31 January, the Presidency is proposing a number of specific elements for an action plan intended to encompass all the initiatives taken, or to be taken, by the Union and the Member States following the earthquake and the tsunamis in the Indian Ocean. The principal aim of this action plan is to better coordinate all the available resources at all levels and in all areas (analysis, planning of resources, operational action, prevention, etc.) to deal effectively with the consequences of such events now and in the future.

2. In drawing up and implementing this action plan, the following general considerations should be taken into account:

- the importance of distinguishing, on the one hand, initiatives to be taken immediately to respond as quickly and efficiently as possible to recent events and, on the other, a discussion to be held in parallel on improving in the longer term the Union's capacity to react to disasters of this kind, both natural and man-made, possibly by putting in place new arrangements yet to be defined ("the Union's rapid response capability");
- the great diversity of instruments and resources to be mobilised depending on their origin (Union/Member States) or their nature (civilian or military) and the need to take account of this diversity when rationalising existing instruments or creating new ones with a view to improving the response; in this context, the need to observe the principles and specific nature of humanitarian aid was recalled;
- the central role played by the United Nations and the resulting need to link current and future Union action to the special responsibilities conferred upon the United Nations and its various subordinate bodies and organisations, such as the OCHA, UNICEF and the WHO; in this connection, the importance of fully associating NGOs and civil society partners in the Union and in the countries affected was also emphasised;
- the need to ensure continuity of action and, in particular, a harmonious transition between the current stage, focused on assistance and emergency aid, and the next stage which will be devoted to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the affected regions;
- the need to take due account of national priorities and the choices of the governments concerned in selecting the programmes and projects to be financed in each country, in accordance with the principle of ownership, while ensuring that resources go to the most vulnerable populations;

- lastly, the need to ensure that resources committed following the earthquake are not at the expense of existing commitments, especially in relation to Africa and the Millennium Goals;
- Coreper and the GAERC will undertake regular follow-up at the political level.

A. MOBILISATION OF BUDGETARY AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

1. Mobilisation of the emergency reserve (EUR 100 million)

Further to the agreement reached at the triologue meeting on 12 January 2005, this was formally approved as an "A" item at the ECOFIN Council on 18 January.

2. Release of financial resources for the medium and long term (EUR 350 million)

In addition to the budgetary measures which it can take directly, in February the Commission will put forward a first proposal on needs for 2005, following the evaluation by the World Bank and the United Nations.

3. Setting up an Indian Ocean Tsunami Facility

The EIB is ready to set up this facility as soon as possible (the approval of the Board of Directors and the Board of Governors is required). The Commission will put forward the appropriate proposals with a view to mobilising the requisite budgetary resources for the guarantee, co-financing and the feasibility studies.

The ECOFIN Council reviewed progress on the dossier on 18 January.

4. Regular review of the implementation of financial commitments

The Working Party on Development Cooperation will regularly undertake such a review on the basis of a Commission report.

The informal meeting of Development Ministers on 14 and 15 February will provide a further opportunity to review the situation. The Presidency will give Coreper a full report in April ahead of the GAERC meeting on 25 April 2005.

5. Debt

The Paris Club is prepared to offer a temporary debt moratorium to those countries who so wish. The debt issue will also feature in the G7 talks in London in early February.

The Ecofin Council reviewed all of these issues on 18 January and will consider them again at its next meeting.

B. STEPPING UP ONGOING ACTIVITIES ON THE GROUND

6. Humanitarian aid, monitoring the situation

The Working Party on Development Cooperation will look at ongoing activities on the ground and will pinpoint and regularly update needs, on the basis of a Commission report submitted to it; with this in mind, attention will be focused primarily on:

- *a continuous assessment of the scale and nature of the aid required by each country and by the region as a whole;*
- *cataloguing the humanitarian aid already given by the Member States and by the EU (by stepping up information exchanges) so as to obtain a clearer overview of the situation;*
- *the involvement of civil society and NGOs;*

- *enhancing coordination between the relevant mechanisms already in place;*
- *specific logistical problems, including those affecting aid deliveries.*

7. Military resources

In response to the report from the mission sent to Geneva by the SG/HR on 10 January 2005, liaison officers from the European Union Military Staff have been posted to the OCHA offices in Bangkok and Rome to help coordinate the military resources made available to the UN and pinpoint current and future needs.

In line with the GAERC conclusions of 7 January 2005 the Secretariat, together with the EUMS, is invited to put forward proposals on procedures for coordinating and supplying Member States' military resources. The PSC is monitoring this issue.

C. RECONSTRUCTION AND SUPPORT MEASURES IN THE MEDIUM TERM

RECONSTRUCTION

8. Monitoring and assessing needs

COASI and, if need be, CODEV will regularly monitor developments and needs in the region, focusing in particular on Indonesia (Aceh) and Sri Lanka, to which end the Situation Centre will continue to supply the necessary information. The Commission will continue to monitor the operational aspects required to steer the action it takes.

In choosing programmes and projects to be funded in each country the Commission and Member States will ensure that they observe the national priorities of the government concerned and bear in mind the potential impact on conflict situations. An assessment should be made of overall needs in relation to infrastructure in general, with particular emphasis on the housing and education sectors; in addition, there will be a need to look at specific needs in the following sectors:

- **Fisheries:** the Commission will present its proposals, looking ahead in particular to the forthcoming meeting of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (7 to 11 March 2005) and the ministerial meeting on 12 March 2005; an initial discussion will be held by the Agriculture Council on 24 January 2005 to enable the Commission subsequently to submit a proposal;*
- **Tourism:** potential forms of cooperation should be considered.*

The Commission and Member States will ensure that, from the evaluation stage onwards, they coordinate their efforts with the development banks (Asian Development Bank and World Bank); they will fully involve NGOs and civil society partners in the EU and the countries affected in their activities.

SUPPORT MEASURES

9. Health

The Presidency briefed the Working Party on Public Health on the situation on 13 January 2005. It highlighted the fact that the WHO was responsible for coordinating health-related aid in situ and that, at this stage, no further medicines, vaccines or medical staff should be dispatched until the WHO had determined what the additional needs were. It has been agreed that this item should remain on the Working Party on Public Health's agenda, for information purposes. The EPSCO Council will discuss this matter if required.

10. Trade-support measures

Examination of the possibilities in this area in the Article 133 Committee and the GSP Working Party. The Commission will submit specific proposals to the Article 133 Committee (Full members) on 21 January 2005.

11. Bilateral partnerships

Coreper will ensure regular follow-up of the initiatives taken by the Member States to encourage the competent authorities to set up twinning arrangements between regions, towns and public and private establishments such as hospitals and schools. The Commission will consider how to support these initiatives.

12. Political dialogue between the EU and Asia and regional cooperation

Generally speaking, COASI will investigate ways in which the EU could help to reinforce the role of ASEAN in the development and stabilisation of the region. It will also look into how to develop bodies for dialogue between the Union and Asia. In this context, COASI will prepare the EU's position for the upcoming ministerial meetings: EU/ASEAN (10-11 March 2005), ASEM (6-7 May 2005) and ARF (29-30 July 2005).

D. REINFORCING THE UNION'S RESPONSE CAPACITY

13. Improvement of existing instruments

*The Working Party on Civil Protection will look into possible improvements in the area of **civil protection**, in the light, inter alia, of the Commission's assessment of the operation of the European civil protection mechanism in the event of earthquakes, and on the basis of proposals from the Commission and the SG/HR. Other Council preparatory bodies (PSC, together with CIVCOM, PMG and the EUMC) will take part in the discussion on this point. Discussion should cover the following issues, in particular:*

- improving the capacity for assessing needs;*
- conditions for and means of offering coordinated assistance;*
- establishing scenarios for different types of situation, making it possible to identify in advance the resources (human, material, medical, transport, logistical) which Member States could make available in the event of a major disaster;*
- the interoperability of systems and means, including civil-military interoperability;*
- link with the UN (and the OCHA).*

*Evaluation and study of improvements which could be made to **humanitarian aid** instruments as such; discussion by the Working Party on Development Cooperation on the basis of a Commission appraisal and bearing in mind the basic principles and specific nature of humanitarian aid.*

14. Developing a "European Union rapid response capability" to deal with disasters (planning, coordination and resource mobilisation structure)

In the light of experience of recent events, the Council asked the Commission and the SG/HR to submit appropriate proposals, each in their respective sphere of competence. Here, discussion should focus in particular on:

- *whether it is sufficient to plan to reinforce and rationalise existing structures or whether new mechanisms should be put in place to complement or replace the existing structures;*
- *the scope of these structures and procedures (natural/man-made disasters, inside/outside the Union);*
- *relations to be established with the MIC (Civil Protection Monitoring and Information Centre) and ECHO;*
- *relationship to work in progress in connection with implementing the Plan of Action on combating Terrorism and the Hague Programme;*
- *increased coordination of military resources made available by the Member States to support operations of this type, in the light of the role played by Member States' military capabilities in the recent earthquake;*
- *coordinating structures in the affected regions.*

15. Longer-term consideration of the creation of a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps

Following the invitation from the Council, thought needs to be given to whether certain resources could and should be pooled in order to cope with different types of disasters.

16. Evaluation of experience gained as regards the protection and support provided to European citizens, and lessons to be learned

The Working Party on Consular Affairs is currently carrying out this evaluation, on the basis of a report from Heads of Mission in the countries affected by the earthquake and assessments made by capitals.

It will examine the possibilities offered by increased coordination of Member States' action, particularly in such areas as assistance, evacuation and the delivery of food and medical care, as well as measures to improve consular cooperation. Following this examination the Working Party on Consular Affairs will draw up concrete proposals as soon as possible, and will present a report to Coreper before the GAERC on 21 February 2005.

The question of improving cooperation between the Member States for the benefit of European citizens will also be examined in the context of preparatory work relating to the establishment of the joint External Action Service (amongst other matters, in the field of consular cooperation).

E. PREVENTION

17. Strategy of reinforcing preventive, early-warning and disaster-prevention measures

The Commission is invited to make proposals to reduce vulnerability to this sort of disaster in the light of the results of the Kobe Conference and of the international conference to be organised under UN auspices at the initiative of Germany.

These proposals could cover the establishment of an early warning system for the Indian Ocean, as well as for the Mediterranean and the Atlantic; they should also take account of work already under way on a system of protection for critical infrastructures.

These proposals will be examined by the Working Party on Civil Protection. The Working Party on Development Cooperation and the Working Party on the Environment will also be involved.
