

**Third meeting of Civil Protection Directors-General of the Member States of the
Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)
Barcelona, 11-12 February 2019**

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Director Generals of Civil Protection of the partner countries of the Union for the Mediterranean met under the co-presidency, on 11 and 12 February 2019 in Barcelona.

Introduction

Building on the achievements of the past decade, the UfM partner countries intend to continue working together to enhance their cooperation on disaster risk management, with the UfM providing a key platform for Euro Mediterranean dialogue on civil protection, by facilitating links between the political and operational levels.

UfM partner countries recognised that over the last 10 years, joint preparedness activities have considerably increased in the Mediterranean region as part of regional, multilateral and bilateral initiatives. A better understanding of existing civil protection systems has proven very beneficial in real emergencies.

Increasing resilience, including cross-institutional cooperation and dialogue amongst policy, operational and scientific communities

UfM partner countries underline that addressing disasters requires a stronger focus on disaster risk management. This, in turn, requires a better understanding of risks, a strong culture of prevention within institutions, as well as a multi-sectoral and cross-border approach to emergency management. The same approach is followed under the Sendai framework. Closer synergies should be sought with international actors in fields such as sustainable development, climate change and marine pollution.

UfM partner countries recognise the importance of engaging local communities and people to support resilience and be better prepared for disasters, as they are often the first responders. The need to work across sectors in order to respond to emerging needs should also be considered, taking into account aspects such as urban resilience, people mobility and critical infrastructure.

UfM partner countries emphasized the importance of targeted disaster risk management information to the population, including to the most vulnerable people. In this respect the UfM partner countries acknowledge the need to address the potential and challenges of social media use in disasters for the emergency management authorities.

Innovative approaches and technical innovations, including forecasting and early warning systems, should be clearly linked to operational needs.

Preparedness for response through capacity development

UfM partner countries acknowledged that the participation of Mediterranean countries in preparedness activities organised e.g. under the umbrella of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism and on a bilateral basis have proven to be useful.

However, there is a need to continue increasing interoperability, use of common standards and language. It was agreed that tailor-made training and exercises on major risks in the region would be required both for professionals and volunteers. Best practices from the past as well as activities implemented under existing regional programmes should be taken into account.

The partner countries of the UfM agreed on the need to share information regarding expertise and capacities. The need to strengthen capacities was acknowledged, particularly in relation to risks such as: forest fires, earthquakes, floods, marine pollution, medical emergencies.

UfM partner countries recognised the need to foster regional sharing of best practices and personnel; capacity building; training and exercises.

Strengthening citizens' awareness and involvement in disaster prevention, preparedness and response by empowering Volunteers and/or Youth

UfM partner countries recognised the essential role of youth as part of disaster risk management, and of engaging young people with their abilities and skillsets. Investing in youth and volunteers as a driving force for community resilience is key to more inclusive disaster risk management. The involvement of experienced professional will of course also be important to establish a well-functioning voluntary system.

UfM partner countries recognise that citizens must be involved in disaster risk management, paying particular attention to people likely to be most vulnerable in a disaster. The need to train volunteers and create a closer link between local emergency services and volunteers was highlighted.

Public information, awareness raising campaigns on major risks represents areas in which UfM Member States are committed to focus their attention, with the possible support of regional programmes. A number of tools may be available in order to strengthen public awareness of disasters including: public announcements, posters and brochures an online information

UfM partner countries agreed that risk communication and the inclusion of disaster risk reduction in academic curricula are essential. They agreed that awareness raising should start at an early age.

There is a rich experience of different models of volunteerism in the region from parallel volunteerism structures to the full integration of volunteers in the Civil Protection services. UfM partners recognised the benefit of bilateral or international cooperation to enable the sharing of this experience in volunteerism, including available training material, sharing of experience from NGOs in disaster risk management, and facilitating exercises in which volunteers can also participate.

Promoting efficient international assistance in case of disasters

UfM partner countries acknowledged that disasters are becoming more complex and that response to such disaster requires multi-sectoral cooperation and coordination in order to protect people, the environment and infrastructure. UfM partner countries are committed to reinforcing emergency response and work together to ensure the most effective and efficient delivery of assistance when needed. To this end, UfM partner countries recognised the need to increase efforts to foster work on Host Nation Support¹. UfM partner countries will reinforce their network of national focal points for requesting, receiving and sending international assistance and will review and continue to work on procedures for requesting, offering and sending international assistance to ensure coordinated, timely, efficient and needs based delivery.

UfM partner countries agreed to reinforce regular bi-lateral, sub-regional and regional communication, including with the Emergency Response Coordination Centre of the European Commission, on main risks, capacities, monitoring, early warning and response.

The importance of developing and sharing relevant non-sensitive elements of risk assessments, and analyses across the region, including sharing situational awareness of risks at an early stage to better prepare the response, was stressed. It is important to continue working together through exercises, exchange of experts and training programmes. There is scope to expand cooperation also in areas where capacities require strengthening or more specialised capacities are lacking.

Conclusions and way forward:

UfM partner countries agreed to continue and deepen the discussion in the field of civil protection and disaster risk management. In order to implement the above-mentioned recommendations they decided to set up three working groups that will tackle the following themes:

- engaging citizens in disaster risk management,
- civil protection volunteers,
- preparing for efficient mutual assistance in the Euro Mediterranean area.

The working groups should report to the Senior Officials ideally by mid-2020. In the light of progress, a possible Ministerial meeting could be convened.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/about/COMM_PDF_SWD%2020120169_F_EN_.pdf