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COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL, THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

Improving the Community Civil Protection Mechanism

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1. Background and purpose

1.1 Background

The Community Civil Protection Mechanism supports and facilitates the mobilisation of vital civil protection assistance for the immediate needs of disaster-stricken countries. Its contribution builds on lessons learned and experience gained from providing assistance in a broad range of previous disasters both inside and outside the EU, including floods in Central Europe (2002) and France (2003), the Prestige accident (2002), the earthquakes in Algeria (2003), Iran (2003) and Morocco (2004), the forest fires in France and Portugal (2003, 2004) and the explosion in Asunción (2004). Most recently, Sweden and Albania called upon the Mechanism for assistance in dealing with the consequences of respectively a major storm and snowstorms.

The Mechanism responded rapidly and efficiently to the tsunami emergency that hit South Asia in December 2004. The intervention of the Mechanism in South Asia – the largest since its creation – has revealed further facets of Europe's disaster response that were less clearly displayed in previous emergencies.

There is widespread recognition of the need to further strengthen the Union's civil protection response capacity. In view of this, the Commission has proposed the creation of a Rapid Response and Preparedness Instrument for Major Emergencies¹ to provide the legal framework for financing of civil protection operations. The present Communication outlines further measures to strengthen the contribution of the Union in this area.

1.2 Requests from the Council and the European Parliament

In its extraordinary meeting of 7 January 2005, the General Affairs and External Relations Council decided to examine possible improvements of the Mechanism, including its analytical capacity, and to investigate the possibility of developing an EU rapid response capability to deal with disasters. Moreover, the EU Action Plan, adopted on 31 January 2005 following the Indian Ocean tsunami, outlines several key areas for action relating directly to civil protection.

The Council's requests coincide with calls from the European Parliament for "the creation of a pool of specialised civilian civil protection units, with appropriate material, which should undertake joint training and be available in the event of natural, humanitarian or environmental disasters, or those associated with industrial risks, within the Union or in the rest of the world".²

Simultaneously, several Member States have tabled proposals for improving the civil protection response capacity of the EU. While the detail of the Member States' proposals differs, there appears to be agreement to build on the existing Mechanism rather than creating additional and duplicate structures.

1.3 Purpose of the present Communication

¹ COM(2005)113 final of 06.04.2005.

² European Parliament Resolution on the recent tsunami disaster in the Indian Ocean, 13 January 2005.

The present Communication focuses specifically on the Community Civil Protection Mechanism, which can be mobilised both internally within the EU and in third countries. It provides an overview of how the Commission proposes to respond to the Council's requests involving civil protection, by taking steps at two distinct levels.

Immediate action will concentrate on improving the Mechanism and maximising the impact of its assistance within the existing legal framework. The measures proposed in section 3 should allow for a clearer demonstration of European solidarity in the immediate future without altering the existing legal instruments.

In addition, structural reforms of the Mechanism are proposed, aimed at developing a more robust civil protection capability that enables the Union to react more rapidly and effectively to any type of disaster in the future. These reforms, set out in section 4, will require amendment of the Council Decision establishing the Mechanism.

In proposing these measures to reinforce the Mechanism, the Commission also aims at increasing the synergies and complementarities between the Mechanism and other instruments that can be mobilised to deal with the variety of disasters that the EU is confronted with, both internally and externally, thus contributing to improving the coherence of the overall EU disaster response capacity.

1.4 Scope of the present Communication

This Communication focuses exclusively on civil protection assistance in the framework of the Mechanism. Civil protection is about immediate relief in the first hours and days of a disaster.³ Like EC humanitarian aid, its purpose is to save lives and alleviate the effects of a disaster during the first days. It differs from EC humanitarian aid, however, in four respects: civil protection assistance can address the environmental consequences of disasters as well as their humanitarian impact; civil protection assistance is provided through teams, experts and equipment provided by the Governments participating in the Mechanism, rather than through the humanitarian organisations (United Nations specialised agencies, Red Cross organisations and NGOs) used by ECHO; civil protection assistance may be delivered both inside and outside the EU, and the Mechanism can be used also as a tool for facilitating and supporting CFSP crisis management operations.

This Communication covers the entire range of emergencies in which the Mechanism can be activated, including those occurring outside the EU. While different procedures are in place for disasters occurring in third countries⁴ and in Member States, they also present a number of common challenges which can be usefully addressed in a single Communication.

This Communication does not address the protection of critical infrastructure and related preparedness measures, nor does it focus on measures limiting the mid-term consequences of terrorist attacks which are necessary to safeguard the area of Freedom, Security and Justice.

³ It typically includes search and rescue, emergency medical assistance, fire fighting, shelter, food and water. Depending on the nature of the disaster, it often also includes more technical types of assistance, such as fire fighting aircraft (in case of forest fires), pumping capacity (floods), ships to combat pollution (oil spills) and detection and decontamination facilities (chemical, biological or nuclear incidents).

⁴ For interventions in third countries, see in particular Article 6 of the Council Decision of 23 October 2001 establishing a Community mechanism to facilitate reinforced cooperation in civil protection assistance interventions (2001/792/EC, Euratom).

These are dealt with in the proposal for a Council Decision Establishing the Specific Programme “Prevention, Preparedness and Consequence Management of Terrorism”, adopted on 6 April 2005.⁵

Nor does it include the financial assistance awarded to Member States or candidate countries affected by a major disaster under the existing EU Solidarity Fund and the new Solidarity Fund proposal adopted on 6 April 2005.⁶ The latter is aimed at providing financial assistance to contribute to a rapid return to normal living conditions in the affected regions and to contribute to financial compensation for the victims of terrorism. It also covers immediate medical assistance and measures to protect the population against imminent health threats, including the cost of vaccines, drugs, medical products, equipment and infrastructure during an emergency.

2. The existing civil protection framework

2.1 The legal instruments for civil protection

The framework for cooperation in the field of civil protection currently consists of two legal instruments.

The Community Civil Protection Mechanism⁷, established in October 2001, is an operational instrument designed to enhance preparedness and to mobilise immediate civil protection assistance in the event of disasters. It can be activated in case of natural and man-made disasters, including nuclear incidents. Today, 30 States – the EU-25, Bulgaria, Romania, Liechtenstein, Norway and Iceland – participate in the Mechanism. It receives a financial allocation on a year-by-year basis.

The civil protection action programme⁸ provides funding of activities that aim at preventive action, preparedness and an effective response. It expires at the end of 2006.

For 2007 onwards, the Commission has adopted a proposal for a Council Regulation Establishing a Rapid Response and Preparedness Instrument for Major Emergencies. This proposal is intended to constitute the new legal basis for granting Community financial support to civil protection actions and measures in the field of preparedness and the response to disasters occurring within the EU and the countries participating in the Mechanism. The legal basis for financial support to civil protection activities outside the EU is provided by the Proposed Instrument for Stability.

2.2 The role of the Mechanism

The operational heart of the Mechanism is the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC), which is based in the European Commission in Brussels. Through the MIC, which is accessible 24 hours a day, the Commission can facilitate the mobilisation of civil protection resources from the Member States in the event of an emergency.

⁵ COM(2005) 124 final of 06.04.2005.

⁶ COM(2005) 108 final of 06.04.2005.

⁷ Council Decision 2001/792/EC, Euratom.

⁸ Council Decision of 9 December 1999 establishing a Community action programme in the field of civil protection (1999/847/EC).

Any country affected by a major disaster – inside or outside the Union – can request assistance through the MIC. The MIC immediately forwards the request to a network of national contact points. They inform the MIC whether they are in a position to offer assistance. The MIC compiles the responses and informs the requesting State of the available assistance. The affected country selects the assistance it needs and establishes contact with the assisting countries. The MIC can also offer technical support, including improved access to satellite images, and acts as an information centre, collecting data and distributing regular updates to all participating countries.

Different procedures apply when intervening inside and outside the Union. For interventions inside the EU the requesting State co-ordinates the contributions received through the Mechanism. The coordination of European civil protection assistance interventions outside the EU is ensured by the Commission and the Presidency operating in close consultation. Such interventions may either be conducted as an autonomous assistance intervention or as a contribution to an intervention led by an international organisation. For these interventions, the MIC ensures close coordination with ECHO as well as UN OCHA (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), which is mandated to ensure the overall coordination of international relief efforts. For interventions outside the EU, the MIC can dispatch within a few hours experts to assess the needs on site, to coordinate the civil protection operations and to liaise with the competent authorities and international organisations. The decision to send assessment experts is taken in close consultation with the Presidency. There are specific procedures for the use of the Mechanism in support of CFSP crisis management operations⁹.

The Mechanism also works towards enhanced preparedness. It is supported by a database with information on the national civil protection capabilities available for assistance interventions. The Mechanism also receives the contents of the military database, compiled by the EU Military Staff (EUMS), giving it a broad picture of all resources available to manage the consequences of disasters. Experts and team leaders included in the civil protection database are invited to participate in a training programme with courses, exercises and an exchange of experts system. A Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS) is currently being implemented to ensure efficient information sharing between the MIC and the national contact points.

3. Improving the Community Civil Protection Mechanism

The Action Plan identifies four areas for possible improvement of the Mechanism: better preparation of civil protection interventions, reinforcing the analytical and assessment capacity, enhancing coordination and improving the assistance to EU citizens affected by disasters outside the Union. The following measures can be taken within the existing legal framework.

3.1 Reinforcing preparedness

The investment made in recent years in training, exercises and preparedness has helped ensure an effective mobilisation of civil protection assistance to disaster-stricken countries both inside and outside the EU. The Action Plan requests further work on establishing scenarios, strengthening training programmes and enhancing interoperability, including civil-military interoperability.

⁹ The Joint Council - Commission Declaration of 29 September 2003 sets out specific rules for the use of the Mechanism in CFSP crisis management operations.

The assessment of civil protection capabilities

In recent months the Commission has worked on scenarios to help identify the resources Member States can make available in the event of a major terrorist attack in another country. The exercise allows the Member States to determine the gaps and weaknesses in European civil protection assistance and is an indispensable step towards improving the interoperability of the available means.

This work needs to be taken forward quickly and expanded to natural and other disasters where civil protection is most likely to be mobilised. In order to do so, the full participation of all Member States is required. The Commission calls upon the few Member States which have not yet done so, to provide full information quickly.

The Commission will continue to liaise with the EU Military Staff (EUMS) to help achieve a meaningful assessment of all available means for civil protection.¹⁰

A modular approach

As part of the expanded scenarios exercise, the Commission proposes that each participating country should identify in advance rapidly deployable and self-sufficient modules, which it can make available – subject to confirmation in each case – to a European civil protection intervention. Once the key modules have been clearly defined, they will be invited to attend relevant training courses and to participate in exercises.

In the future, this would mean that the MIC would request Member States to mobilise specific modules. This approach will enable the MIC to compose coherent packages of civil protection assistance and to target more precisely the specific needs arising in each emergency.

This modular approach would be a logical development of the current system, where certain teams are available in most Member States to be deployed at short notice. It has the additional benefit of allowing full advantage to be taken of the different types of expertise that are available in the Member States.

The development of modules would also be an important measure to strengthen the international capacity for disaster response, and would allow the EU to contribute specific pre-defined packages of civil protection assistance in third countries. In the development of the modular approach, attention will be given to ensuring compatibility and complementarity with modules and standards developed in the framework of the UN.

Training and exercises

Training courses and simulation exercises assist in enhancing interoperability and developing a common intervention culture. Current efforts in this field need to be further developed and, where necessary, intensified. This may include special training and exercises on specific issues (e.g., assessment methodologies) or for specific target groups. Participation of military counterparts in training courses and exercises should be encouraged to promote civil-military interoperability. Coherence and synergies with existing training efforts in the UN and Red

¹⁰ In its Communication ‘Reinforcing EU Disaster and Crisis Response’, the Commission makes proposals to strengthen the links between the Commission and the EU Military Staff, including the detachment of liaison officers to the Civil-Military Cell. COM(2005) 153 final of 20.04.2005.

Cross systems will be explored in order to foster a common operational culture and interoperability. Cross-participation in exercises will be encouraged.

3.2 Analysis and assessment of needs

Early warning and analysis

Valuable time can be gained by reinforcing the links between the MIC and early warning and duty systems existing at EU and UN level. The centre needs to receive all available alerts for natural disasters in order to determine swiftly whether they could lead to a request for assistance and reduce the time needed to prepare a civil protection intervention.

The MIC should also be in a position to continuously monitor developments relevant to disasters, making maximum use of all available information sources.¹¹ New developments and incoming reports need to be analysed immediately in order to determine their potential impact and evaluate the possible civil protection needs. The scientific and technological resources available at European level, including information and surveillance systems, will provide an essential contribution to this work.

In order to do so, the MIC will need to ensure a genuine ‘around the clock’ duty system¹², thus assuring immediate reaction to emergencies, with sufficient staff as back-up to ensure adequate staffing at all stages of an event.

Strengthening the on site assessment of needs

One of the key lessons emerging from the recent tsunami disaster is the need to reinforce the assessment capacity at the scene of a disaster in order to identify specific needs in matters in which civil protection is specialised. Such capacity will obviously operate in close cooperation and complementarity with ECHO humanitarian emergency response field teams as well as with UN and other assessment teams on site. A reinforced EU civil protection needs assessment capacity should be designed to reinforce existing global capacity both by streamlining the EU contribution to UN efforts and by developing additional capacity within the Union.

Depending on the magnitude of the disaster, the MIC should in future be capable of sending out small assessment teams of approximately 5 members rather than individual experts. This requires that Member States inform the MIC in advance of all experts they can make available for short-term missions and that they confirm the availability of these experts in the very early stages of an emergency.

Moreover, the assessment methodologies and standards need to be reviewed, taking into account accepted methodologies and standards developed by the UN and others, in order to develop a consistent approach to the assessment of civil protection needs in the framework of the Mechanism.

¹¹ Existing information sources include, for instance, the EU delegations, the RELEX crisis room, the ECHO crisis room and experts, ECURIE, facilities, such as GDAS, available through the Joint Research Centre and DG Research and the UNDAC alert system.

¹² At present while the MIC provides a 24 hour, 7 day a week response capacity, this is done on the basis of staff being on standby, ready for service within 30 minutes, in cooperation with the Security Directorate of the Commission.

The quality of the assessment can be further improved by specific training for assessment experts. The training would focus in particular on coordination with UN, ECHO, IFRC and other experts and on assessment methodologies and standards.

Finally, as already agreed by the Council on 4 October 2004, the Commission will develop common insignia to identify personnel on site as part of the Mechanism. This will help develop a sense of belonging to an EU civil protection force and create a more visible EU presence on the scene of a disaster.

3.3 Enhanced coordination

The Council has asked the Commission to propose ways to improve the coordination of the contributions of Member States, both as an autonomous Union operation and as a collective contribution by the EU to an operation led by another organisation.

Providing European civil protection assistance in a coordinated way

Above all, a fully concerted response from the EU requires that Member States work together through the Mechanism. The response to the South Asia emergency revealed sharp differences in the approaches of the Member States. A firm commitment to work together at European level – in support of the United Nations and the affected country – is needed to allow the full potential of the Mechanism to be reached.

Pursuing complementarities and coordination with the United Nations

When intervening in third countries, the Union must be able to supplement efforts undertaken by the national or local authorities and provide a comprehensive contribution to the international relief effort coordinated by the UN. For interventions outside the EU, the lead role of UN OCHA in coordination is fully recognised. Throughout the South Asia disaster, the Mechanism has worked in close consultation with UN OCHA and its staff on site. Existing cooperation and coordination with the UN, based on the agreement reached in 2004¹³, will be further developed in all key operational areas of disaster response, both on site and at headquarters. The Commission will ensure full implementation of the agreement with UN OCHA in order to maximise the use of available resources and ensure a coordinated response to disasters in third countries.

Pursuing complementarities and coordination with humanitarian aid

In many disaster situations, civil protection intervenes in response to humanitarian needs and contributes to the wide humanitarian response. It is therefore essential to ensure that civil protection interventions are closely coordinated with humanitarian aid actors at all stages of the operational response.

At Community level, the Mechanism works closely with ECHO, both on site and at headquarters, to ensure a comprehensive European emergency response to sudden disasters. Commission operating procedures already emphasise and will continue to reinforce synergies and complementarities between EC humanitarian assistance and civil protection, building on their specific roles and comparative advantages. Work already initiated on joint lessons

¹³ Exchange of letters between UN OCHA and the Commission of the European Communities concerning their cooperation in the framework of disaster response (in case of simultaneous interventions in a country affected by a disaster), 27-28 October 2004.

learned and operational linkage from planning to implementation phase will be furthered to ensure a proper joined-up response whenever the two instruments are mobilised for the same disaster.

Strengthening the operational planning capacity

The operational planning capacity of the MIC needs to be reinforced. This will allow the Centre to play a more central role in planning and coordinating the transportation, distribution and delivery of Member States' civil protection assistance both inside and outside the EU.

Strengthening on site coordination

For interventions outside the EU, the strengthened capacity at headquarters should be paralleled with an equally strong coordination capacity on site. Improved coordination of European civil protection assistance would require a stronger on-site coordination of the European contribution. This would strengthen the capacity of the local authorities and the UN to co-ordinate relief efforts by ensuring a single point of contact for all EU civil protection assistance. The coordination could cover the arrival, distribution and delivery of European civil protection assistance, as well as coordination with external actors, including UN agencies, local and international NGOs.

Coordination with military counterparts

The use of military resources in support of civil protection operations outside the EU must be based on the relevant international rules, notably the Guidelines of 1994 on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets (MCDA) in Disaster Relief (the so-called Oslo Guidelines) and the UN Guidelines on the Use of MCDA in Complex Emergencies of 2003, and must respect the overall coordination role of the UN, where present.

The tsunami emergency has nevertheless highlighted the potential value of military assets in major disasters and the need to ensure better coordination with military counterparts. Where the use of military assets is necessary and appropriate under international guidelines, the Mechanism must be in a position to rely on military means to support its civilian assistance efforts.

It is recalled that the Council adopted on 17 May 2004 the modalities for making the military database available to the Mechanism. These include procedures for the use of military means in the framework of the Mechanism in case of terrorist attacks inside the Union. They provide that the Mechanism forwards all requests for assistance to the designated national civil protection contact points, which will then facilitate answers on the availability of military assets and capabilities in their response to requests for assistance. Similar procedures should be adopted for other types of disasters so that military means can be mobilised more quickly and usefully in case of need.

Access to EU military assets can also be improved through better use of the EU database of military assets. The Commission Communication 'Reinforcing EU Disaster and Crisis Response'¹⁴ outlines how the development of specific planning scenarios with the Civil-Military Cell would also contribute to this objective.

Strengthening coordination inside the Commission

¹⁴ COM(2005) 153 final of 20.04.2005.

Experience in South Asia has highlighted the importance of coordination between the Commission services. On 20 October 2004, the Commission announced the creation of ARGUS and a Central Crisis Centre.¹⁵ The Commission is also actively examining its internal procedures to ensure that, during an emergency, it can respond in the most effective and coherent manner.

Financing transportation

Better coordination of European civil protection interventions also requires the possibility to make use of all available assistance to meet the needs of the affected country. As experience during the tsunami emergency demonstrated, there is a clear need to enhance the transportation capacity for European civil protection assistance. The Council Decision establishing the Mechanism already allows the MIC to facilitate transportation of civil protection assistance. The proposed Rapid Response and Preparedness Instrument, if adopted, would enable a contribution to be made to the costs of such transportation for disasters in the EU or in countries participating in the Mechanism.¹⁶ The costs associated with transportation of civil protection assistance to countries outside the EU are addressed in the proposed Instrument for Stability.

3.4 Ensuring the Mechanism serves the needs of the CFSP

The Feira European Council identified civil protection as one of the priority areas in which EU capacity for civilian crisis management should be strengthened. The Community Civil Protection Mechanism plays a central role in building up this capacity. The Commission recalls the Joint Declaration of 29 September 2003, which sets out procedures for the use of the Mechanism in CFSP operations. The Commission will continue to work with the Council to ensure that the Mechanism fully meets the needs of future operations under the CFSP.

3.5 Improved assistance to EU citizens

Finally, the Council also highlighted the need to improve assistance to European citizens affected by disasters outside the EU and called for discussion of the role which could be played by existing instruments in this respect.

Experience in South Asia has shown that cooperation between civil protection and consular authorities can be mutually beneficial when intervening outside the Union. Through its 24/24 hours network linking the Member States' administrations, the Mechanism can provide useful operational assistance, in particular by exchanging information on victim identification teams, repatriation and (medical) evacuation needs of all Member States. Moreover, the MIC encouraged Member States to make use of the aircraft bringing civil protection assistance to repatriate European citizens on their return, thus building a bridge between traditional civil protection assistance and consular cooperation. Where appropriate and useful, the Commission is ready to make the Mechanism available for such new tasks.

4. Longer term actions to develop the European Union's civil protection capability

The Council has requested the Commission to formulate proposals enabling the Union to take a qualitative step forward in its civil protection activities and to develop stronger capacities. The EU Action Plan of 31 January 2005 identifies the specific issues to be considered,

¹⁵ COM(2004) 701 final of 20.10.2004.

¹⁶ COM(2005) 113 final of 06.04.2005.

including the pooling of resources, relations with the MIC and ECHO and between Member States (e.g., via an online information system), coordination of military resources to support civil protection interventions and the coordinating structures to be put in place on site.

The Mechanism, which has proved capable of mobilising civil protection assistance quickly in a wide range of situations, can contribute to the overall EU rapid response capability. In addition to the improvements suggested above, structural reforms of the Mechanism are proposed to strengthen its response capacity.

4.1 Pooling civil protection resources

The existing Council Decision establishing the Community Civil Protection Mechanism enables the Member States to pool civil protection resources on a European scale. As mentioned above, the scenario-based assessment of capabilities will enable Member States to identify shortcomings in the current civil protection assistance capacity available through the Mechanism.

Where the combined national assets and capabilities are not sufficient to meet the possible needs, further steps need to be taken to develop additional civil protection capabilities at national level or to ensure better pooling of resources at European level. This requires a clear legal basis and a willingness of Member States to make more civil protection resources available for assistance to other countries and to share information on these resources.

The new instrument amending the Council Decision on the Mechanism, to be proposed in 2005, should provide a basis for the establishment of quantitative targets for the civil protection resources available at European level to assist Member States and third countries in need.

4.2 Towards a pro-active approach

When it comes to interventions outside the EU, recent experience shows that valuable time can be lost between the occurrence of the disaster and the receipt of a formal request for assistance.

The strengthening of the analytical capacity of the MIC can pave the way for a more proactive approach when learning of disasters. In the future, the MIC should be mandated to inform a third country – through EC Delegations, EC experts on site or other diplomatic channels – of the possibility of requesting assistance whenever there is a clear need for civil protection assistance. This will help minimising the delay between the occurrence of a disaster and the delivery of assistance. If the affected country declines to request assistance, no further steps can be taken.

4.3 Standby modules

Today, each Member State decides on an *ad hoc* and voluntary basis whether or not it is in a position to provide the requested civil protection assistance. This system makes the speed of European civil protection assistance dependent on national decision-making in 25 Member States.

In the future, based on the modular approach described in section 3.1, Member States could take an additional step by agreeing to keep a small number of key modules on permanent standby for European civil protection interventions. Moreover, Member States could reach a political agreement – in advance of any emergency – to mobilise these standby civil

protection modules whenever the appropriate European authority requests their immediate deployment. This would ensure that a few key modules are at all times ready to be sent and significantly shorten the time needed for the mobilisation of civil protection assistance.

Although Member States would agree in advance to send these teams upon receipt of a European request, provision could be made for situations of overriding national need. Groups of Member States could for instance share the burden of keeping certain key modules on standby, thus ensuring their permanent availability at European level.

These units need to be rapidly deployable and fully self-sufficient. Clear agreement should be reached with the Member States on the terms and conditions of their deployment. The interoperability of these units, which would constitute the core of each European civil protection intervention, can be ensured through exercises and training. As such, they would effectively be the nucleus of a European civil protection force.

4.4 Reinforcing the logistical basis

The Mechanism should be provided with the appropriate logistical means. The proposal for a Council Regulation Establishing a Rapid Response and Preparedness Instrument provides the possibility to finance the costs of hiring equipment that is necessary to ensure a rapid European response and which cannot be obtained from the Member States. Examples could include aircraft or equipment to combat forest fires during the summer months. For interventions outside the Union, possible synergies with the UN need to be explored, in particular with the UN Joint Logistics Centre (UN JLC) and the UN Central Register for Disaster Management Capacities.

In its Communication on Reinforcing EU Disaster and Crisis Response¹⁷, the Commission has proposed a feasibility study into the establishment of a common logistical platform for directly managed operations outside the EU.

4.5 Promoting international coordination of disaster response

Mandated to facilitate the mobilisation of civil protection assistance from 30 European countries, the Community Mechanism has access to a vast range of response capabilities. In addition to general disaster relief, these include a unique set of advanced technical capabilities, ranging from decontamination kits to specialised fire fighting equipment. This assistance can provide a valuable complement to other international humanitarian relief efforts in various types of disasters.

Building upon the added value of European civil protection assistance and in support of the lead role of the UN, the Mechanism should aim at enhancing international coordination in order to maximise the use of available resources and facilitate a fully coordinated response to disasters in third countries. This would include contributing to the development and refinement of operational procedures for on site coordination and needs assessment. It would require a more active international role for the Mechanism, based upon close coordination with UN OCHA and taking proper account of the mandates of other international organisations.

5. Conclusion

¹⁷ COM(2005) 153 final of 20.04.2005.

Section 3 of this Communication has identified measures that can be taken quickly to improve the performance of the Mechanism. Section 4 makes a set of proposals for the future development of the Mechanism which will require an amendment of the Council Decision on the Mechanism.

The proposals made under each of these sections have financial implications. Preparedness activities and actions within the EU are covered by the proposal for a Rapid Response and Preparedness Instrument that was adopted by the Commission on 6 April 2005.¹⁸ Actions outside the EU will be covered by the Stability Instrument.¹⁹ It is to be noted that these instruments are still to be adopted by the Council.

The human resources implications of these proposals will be addressed in the context of the annual allocation exercise matching resources allocation with priorities defined at political level. A detailed breakdown of the overall resources needed to carry out the activities described above is provided in the financial statement attached to the proposal for a Rapid Response and Preparedness Instrument. To the extent that these needs are not fully met it may be necessary to review the extent of the activities proposed.

The Commission invites the Council and the European Parliament to endorse the orientations set out in this Communication and to give their support to the proposals it contains.

¹⁸ COM(2005) 113 final of 06.04.2005.
¹⁹ COM(2004) 630 final of 29.09.2004.