

Resolution of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 31 October 1994 on strengthening Community cooperation on civil protection (94/C 313/01)

THE COUNCIL AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES, MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,

Recalling their resolution of 25 June 1987 on the introduction of Community cooperation on civil protection (1), their resolution of 13 February 1989 on the new developments in Community cooperation on civil protection (2), their resolution of 23 November 1990 on Community cooperation on civil protection (3), their resolution of 23 November 1990 on improving mutual aid between Member States in the event of a natural or man-made disaster (4) and their resolution of 8 July 1991 on improving mutual aid in the event of a natural or technological disaster (5),

Having regard to the benefit afforded to those involved in civil protection by the training activities and simulation exercises organized by the Commission; whereas these activities and exercises have helped both to improve their level of preparation and to develop interpersonal links between them; whereas such links will make for an improved exchange of experience at Community level and increase the efficiency and speed of mutual assistance operations, Whereas the system of exchanges of experts currently being developed will help to increase that benefit;

Noting the important role played by volunteers in many areas of civil protection, and drawing attention in this context to the resolution on voluntary work adopted by the European Parliament (6);

Whereas, subject to Member States' operational responsibilities, the maintenance and reinforcement of the operational arrangements already in place are a major asset for mutual assistance in the event of disasters;

Whereas the experience acquired in data transmission between Member States has demonstrated the need to set up a committee of users within the existing permanent network of national correspondents arrangements to guide any new initiative in this field;

Emphasizing that those involved in civil protection should be given the opportunity of pooling their experience within a European perspective;

Believing that self-protection is an essential component of civil protection;

Reiterating the necessity of reinforcing the information, education and awareness-raising initiatives aimed at the public and in particular at young people, among other things in order to increase their degree of self-protection;

Whereas it is important to take specific measures under the European Economic Area Agreement (7), which came into force on 1 January 1994, and in particular Article 78 thereof;

Whereas every effort must be made to ensure the best possible coordination of measures taken at international level in order to rationalize the use of the resources involved in such

measures, without prejudice to Member States' responsibilities in this regard;

Recalling that, while Article 3 (t) of the Treaty establishing the European Community already provides for the possibility of measures in the sphere of civil protection, the declaration on civil protection, energy and tourism annexed to the Final Act of the Treaty on European Union mentions that the provisions on civil protection in particular will be examined in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article N (2) of the Treaty on European Union, on the basis of a report which the Commission will submit to the Council by 1996 at the latest;

Considering, therefore, that it would be appropriate to adumbrate broad guidelines that could be adopted by the Commission for the purposes of that report;

Recalling that, in accordance with point 2 of the resolution of 25 June 1987, a permanent network of correspondents from the Member States and the Commission has been established;

Whereas this network plays an essential role in the drawing up of any Community initiatives that are undertaken;

ACKNOWLEDGE that the permanent network of national correspondents, hereinafter referred to as 'the network' represents an essential framework which ensures the consistency of Community cooperation on civil protection and that the national correspondents must continue to play an active part, in particular in order to facilitate the participation of experts in Community measures, to communicate information on these measures to those concerned, and to provide better access to the advantage of Community backing for projects initiated by the Member States;

HEREBY AGREE that, within their administrations, the necessary human resources will be assigned or kept available, as required, for the smooth operation and possible development of the role of the network, and that they will arrange for the directors-general for civil protection or their counterparts to meet regularly and in principle once a year;

WELCOME the progress that has been made in implementing the resolutions mentioned above, especially as regards the development of training activities, simulation exercises and pilot projects, and also call upon the Commission to continue and reinforce its action;

DESIRE also that cooperation may be developed between schools and national training centres that are active in the field of civil protection without prejudice to Member States' responsibilities in this regard;

NOTE with satisfaction the preparatory work initiated by the Commission for the creation of an expert-exchange system for an initial pilot phase of two years, in line with the request made in the resolution of 23 November 1990; agree, furthermore, to assess by the end of this initial stage whether this system should be continued and if so, to have the arrangements for it examined, in particular with regard to the system of financing, within the network;

ENCOURAGE the Commission's initiative for pooling, in close cooperation with the national administrations, different experience in the voluntary sector in order to identify actions which contribute to better use of the resources of this sector and accordingly emphasize the

usefulness of the organization in Portugal of a self-tuition workshop on voluntary work in June 1994;

GREATLY APPRECIATE the progress made in setting up assistance arrangements, in particular through the creation of an operational manual listing, among other things, national and Community points of contact, points of access to expert opinion on certain areas of intervention, as well as of registers of the resources that are available in each Member State and the procedures and arrangements for making such resources available subject to the operational responsibilities of the Member States;

WELCOME the arrangements made by the Commission, within its departments, to provide a 24-hour standby service and to meet the costs relating to the secondment of experts;

CALL UPON the Commission to consolidate these arrangements and when necessary to plan for the expansion of their scope by setting up groups of experts specializing in specific areas, in close cooperation with the network;

BELIEVE in particular that in its proposals for actions, the Commission should emphasize preparation to cope with disasters, disaster prevention and risk management; support in this respect the Commission's move to undertake, in close cooperation with the network, measures to ensure that those required to prevent and deal with emergencies are better prepared;

CONSIDER that the requirements of civil protection services need to be taken into account in the context of the trans-European information networks between administrations; call upon the Commission to assess the need for and the feasibility and cost of a teleconference system which is permanently accessible for emergencies in particular;

CALL UPON the Commission to give consideration, in accordance with the conclusions of the Europe 93 exercise and in collaboration with the network, to the opportunities for giving those who work for civil protection a forum for pooling their experience;

REITERATE their wish to see the development of initiatives to ensure that citizens, in particular at school level, become better informed, better educated and more aware so that, among other things, their level of self-protection can be increased;

NOTE the cooperation which has developed between the Community and the EFTA countries and welcome the fact that this cooperation is strengthened by the participation in Community training activities of experts from the countries which are Contracting Parties to the EEA Agreement but do not belong to the Community;

CALL UPON the Commission, through its regular contacts with international organizations active in the sphere of civil protection, to contribute to better coordination between civil protection measures on the international level, without prejudice to Member States' responsibilities in this regard;

CONSIDER that it was appropriate that, at the World Conference for the prevention of natural disasters called in Yokohama from 23 to 27 May 1994 by the United Nations General Assembly, all the initiatives conducted as part of Community cooperation in the field of civil protection were presented in collaboration with the Commission, so that this experience could be made available to other regions;

UNDERTAKE to cooperate closely and actively with the Commission in preparing the report which it must submit to the Council by 1996 at the latest as a basis for examination, in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article N (2) of the Treaty on European Union, of the question of introducing a Title relating to civil protection into the Treaty establishing the European Community.

- (1) OJ No C 176, 4. 7. 1987, p. 1.
- (2) OJ No C 44, 23. 2. 1989, p. 3.
- (3) OJ No C 315, 14. 12. 1990, p. 1.
- (4) OJ No C 315, 14. 12. 1990, p. 3.
- (5) OJ No C 198, 27. 7. 1991, p. 1.
- (6) OJ No C 10, 16. 1. 1984, p. 288.
- (7) OJ No L 1, 3. 1. 1994, p. 1.