**Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction**

**Preparatory Committee- Geneva, 14-15 November 2014**

**Statement of the Council of Europe**

delivered by

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I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), a Partial Agreement within the Council of Europe gathering together 26 of the 47 member States of the Council of Europe which decided more than 25 years ago to develop a specific effort in the domain of disaster risk reduction. Over the years, the Agreement has developed substantial work in disaster risk reduction and has used the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015 as a guiding principle for its activities during the last ten years.

Ten years of HFA implementation have contributed to a significant shift towards an increased recognition that prevention aspects, and not only post-disaster intervention, are a key issue to limit the consequences of natural hazards. The HFA has proved essential in fostering global, regional and national efforts even though, in spite of the adoption of five major priorities, a lot still remains to be done. Furthermore, the last ten years have also brought to light new challenges for disaster risk reduction that were practically non-existent, or at least underestimated, in the original HFA.

Hence the new Post-2015 framework has to update the HFA relevance by providing new insight on already existing approaches as well as taking on upcoming challenges in the domain. At this almost final stage in the preparation of the Post 2015 framework, the EUR-OPA Agreement would like to convey three main aspects that, even if already present in the zero draft, should be particularly highlighted in the final version submitted for approval at the World Conference:

**Firstly, the acknowledgement of the importance of the human dimension in all the phases of the risk cycle**

Sophisticated technical solutions had often been privileged as the answer to ever rising risks for societies. However, any technical proposal for disaster risk reduction has to consider explicitly the role of the human factor in its actual success or failure: an adequate consideration of the end-user needs and behaviour is crucial. In that sense, taking account of the special needs of certain categories of population (such as people with disabilities, migrants or children) is necessary either through specific actions or through truly inclusive ones.

The EUR-OPA Agreement is already working along these lines through its ongoing activities on involvement of people with disabilities or migrants in the overall risk management cycle and based on this fruitful experience, it will remain in the future an active actor in that specific aspect of disaster risk reduction.

**Secondly, the need to foster the networking role of each pertinent stakeholder in an overall strategy**

If specific actions by individual stakeholders (at local, national and international levels) have proved an important factor for advancing towards a better protection against natural and technological hazards, a more comprehensive approach to disaster risk reduction requires a truly network approach where interaction between different stakeholders' actions is the rule to have the wider possible impact, going thus beyond the usual debate on respective advantages of top/down or bottom/up strategies.

In particular, the link between knowledge and action is a *raison d’être* of the EUR-OPA Agreement since its creation and this productive experience will be fostered through the work of its Network of Specialized Centres by providing more accurate knowledge on risks and proposing innovative approaches to disaster risk reduction issues.

**Thirdly, the increased synergy between interrelated domains to fully address the present and future challenges**

The need for greater synergy among the usual stakeholders in disaster risk reduction is obvious butsynergy with stakeholders in other related domains is also essential. As disaster risk reduction is a key element in sustainable development efforts and in turn it is conditioned by climate change impact, the interlink between the three UN instruments (HFA, MDG and Kyoto Protocol) to be renewed in 2015 gives a unique opportunity to define adequate common or coordinated actions to increase our contemporary societies’ resilience to a permanently changing environment.

The EUR-OPA Agreement strives for better interaction between these related domains by supporting the setting up of truly multisectorial national platforms and will continue to promote in its activities the involvement of experts from other related fields to better assess the adequate measures for disaster risk reduction.

To conclude, we believe and are confident that the Council of Europe, through its European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), is well-positioned to support and complement existing European efforts at both national and international levels to better protect citizens against the threats associated to natural and technological risks.

Thank you for your attention.