

I

(Information)

COUNCIL

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

of 27 November 2003

on strengthening Community cooperation in the field of civil protection assistance

(2003/C 317/01)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

1. RECALLING the recent exceptional events and occurrences and in particular the large forest fires that occurred during summer 2003 in many Member States, together with their tragic human toll — including casualties for fire-fighters and members of rescue teams and forestry services — as well as their damage to health, environment, infrastructure and property;
2. HAVING REGARD to the Resolution of the European Parliament, of 4 September 2003, on the effects of the summer heatwave, which contains important elements relevant to civil protection;
3. SALUTES the dedication of the volunteers and fire-fighters that were involved in missions to combat and respond to the forest fires and other disasters and serious accidents;
4. WELCOMES the unprecedented manifestations of concrete solidarity amongst the Member States during summer 2003, i.a. by the dispatch of both aerial and terrestrial means, which resulted in the largest number of mutual assistance interventions ever performed in the Community;
5. CONSIDERS this solidarity to be in line with the outcome of the European Convention on the introduction into the draft Constitutional Treaty of provisions related to Civil Protection;
6. NOTES the positive impact of the Council Decision establishing a Community action programme in the field of civil protection⁽¹⁾ on the cooperation between Member States and the Commission, i.a. in making available fora for a still closer and more developed cooperation between Member States and the Commission;
7. RECOGNISES the positive contribution of the Community Civil Protection Mechanism established under Council Decision 2001/792/EC, Euratom⁽²⁾ and especially of the Commission's Monitoring and Information Centre established under that Decision;
8. WELCOMES the efforts by the Commission to implement the tasks imposed by the Community Mechanism and to improve the capabilities of the monitoring and information centre in facing emergencies of an exceptional magnitude;
9. WELCOMES the announcement by the Commission that it will examine, in the framework of the existing instruments, its present capabilities for dealing with natural and technological disasters and accidents and TAKES NOTE that, if appropriate, it will propose new instruments;
10. INVITES the Commission to present within the shortest time-span the appropriate proposals to achieve the developments referred to in paragraph 9 and soon to inform the Council of their form and timetable;
11. WELCOMES the intention of the Commission in the meantime to enable the Monitoring and Information Centre to play a dynamic and proactive supporting role with a view to facilitating Member States' coordination in any forthcoming emergency or threat and to that end:
 - to identify the needs, and to examine ways and means to provide it with the necessary adequate resources,
 - to continue its efforts aiming at further improving the functioning of the Monitoring and Information Centre and at eliminating difficulties in its operation and to amend its procedures as necessary;
12. Also INVITES the Commission as soon as possible to present the announced communication on a common approach to the prevention of risks.

⁽¹⁾ Council Decision 1999/847/EC of 9 December 1999 establishing a Community action programme in the field of civil protection (OJ C 327, 21.12.1999, p. 53).

⁽²⁾ Council Decision 2001/792 EC, Euratom of 23 October 2001 establishing a Community mechanism to facilitate cooperation in civil protection assistance interventions (OJ L 297, 15.11.2001, p. 7).