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33. Emphasises the importance of the EUSF as the main instrument that should enable the European Union to react rapidly to major disasters, such as floods, fires and drought, as well as to cyclones, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions or even tsunamis; urges the Commission and the Council to adopt Parliament's proposals for a review of that fund, with particular reference to extending the assistance provided to all victims of natural disasters and their immediate family members;

34. Urges the Council to adapt the EUSF with particular reference to time limits and eligible actions in order to enable it to deal with the kind of specific natural disasters which occur in the Member States, such as fires, droughts and floods;

35. Considers that the EUSF should continue to enable action to be taken in the case of disasters which, although significant, do not achieve the minimum level required and that assistance may also be provided in special circumstances in cases where most of the population in a specific region has been affected by a disaster which will have a serious, long-term effects on their living conditions;

36. Nevertheless, points to the need for the involvement of other existing instruments, such as State aid for regional purposes or European Investment Bank loans, with the aim of preventing if possible natural disasters from happening and remedying the damage caused by natural disasters;

37. Asks that the setting up of an agriculture disaster fund be looked into for the purpose of providing compensation for any loss of income stemming from crop losses on the part of farmers affected by natural disasters;

38. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, to the governments and parliaments of the Member States having regions affected by natural disasters in 2005, to the regional and local authorities of those areas, as well as to the Committee of the Regions.

P6_TA(2006)0224

Natural Disasters — environmental aspects

European Parliament resolution on Natural Disasters (fires, droughts and floods) — environmental aspects (2005/2192(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolutions of 5 September 2002 on floods in Europe ⁽¹⁾, 14 April 2005 on the drought in Portugal ⁽²⁾, 12 May 2005 on the drought in Spain ⁽³⁾ and 8 September 2005 on the natural disasters (fires and floods) in Europe that summer ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change of 11 December 1997, and the ratification thereof by the European Community on 25 April 2002,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 November 2005 on “Winning the Battle against Global Climate Change” ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 18 January 2006 on Climate Change ⁽⁶⁾,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 272 E, 13.11.2003, p. 471.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 33 E, 9.2.2006, p. 599.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 92 E, 20.4.2006, p. 414.

⁽⁴⁾ *Texts Adopted* on that date, P6_TA(2005)0334.

⁽⁵⁾ *Texts Adopted* on that date, P6_TA(2005)0433.

⁽⁶⁾ *Texts Adopted* on that date, P6_TA(2006)0019.

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- having regard to Regulation (EC) No 2152/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 November 2003 concerning monitoring of forests and environmental interactions in the Community (Forest Focus) ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 16 February 2006 on implementation of a European Union forest strategy ⁽²⁾ and the Commission's communication on a European forest strategy (COM(1998)0649),
 - having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 2012/2002 of 11 November 2002 establishing the European Union Solidarity Fund ⁽³⁾, currently under revision,
 - having regard to the Commission's communications concerning the space programme Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) (COM(2004)0065), and reinforcing EU Disaster and Crisis Response in third countries (COM(2005)0153), and the proposal for a Directive on the assessment and management of floods (COM(2006)0015),
 - having regard to the proposal for a Council regulation establishing a Rapid Response and Preparedness Instrument for major emergencies (COM(2005)0113) and the proposal for a Council decision establishing a Community civil protection mechanism (COM(2006)0029), recast of Council Decision 2001/792/EC, Euratom of 23 October 2001 establishing a Community mechanism to facilitate reinforced cooperation in civil protection assistance interventions ⁽⁴⁾,
 - having regard to the research project into management of flood risks under the European Union Sixth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (2002-2006),
 - having regard to the resolution and annex adopted on 26 March 2006 by the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly's working party on civil protection and the prevention of natural and ecological disasters ⁽⁵⁾,
 - having regard to the scientific report by the Institute for Environment and Sustainability of the Commission's Joint Research Centre on climate change and the European water dimension ⁽⁶⁾,
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (A6-0149/2006),
- A. whereas climate change is causing and intensifying extreme weather events and natural disasters (flooding, extreme droughts and fires) which have been occurring in ever more rapid succession throughout the world, and have caused grave damage in terms of human losses, environmental deterioration and reduction of economic activity,
- B. whereas at the last UN Conference on Climate Change held in December 2005 in Montreal, Canada, significant progress was made at world level with regard to ways of fighting climate change and strengthening respect for and implementation of the Kyoto Protocol, and foresight was displayed with regard to the second period of commitment following 2012,
- C. whereas forests and agriculture play a fundamental role in environmental conservation, in terms of the balances generated in both the carbon and the hydrological cycles, whose contribution to slowing down global warming, avoiding erosion, preventing the effects of torrential rain and moderating the greenhouse effect is simply incalculable,
- D. whereas situations of extreme drought and forest fires have increased in frequency and scale in southern Europe and whereas, despite their being exacerbated by climate change, these situations are to a certain extent unforeseeable and inevitable, which means that the relevant scientific research needs to be further developed and greater funding assigned to it, with a view to improving risk assessment mechanisms, systems of prevention and means of combating these phenomena,

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 324, 11.12.2003, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ *Texts Adopted* on that date, P6_TA(2006)0068.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 311, 14.11.2002, p. 3.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 297, 15.11.2001, p. 7.

⁽⁵⁾ http://www.europarl.eu.int/intcoop/empa/committee_cult/wg_tsunami_res26mars_en.pdf.

⁽⁶⁾ http://ies.jrc.cec.eu.int/fileadmin/Documentation/Reports/Inland_and_Marine_Waters/Pubs/Climate_Change_and_the_European_Water_Dimension_2005.pdf.

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- E. whereas the Forest Focus programme is intended to promote information exchange on forests in the Community so as to promote their conservation and protection; whereas the programme covers integrated programmes designed to protect forests against fire and to combat desertification,
 - F. whereas the Solidarity Fund Regulation (EC) No 2012/2002 contains prior conditions which make it difficult to use the Fund in certain disaster situations; whereas this concerns not only the amount and type of the eligible expenditure, but also the inflexibility of the deadlines and procedures,
 - G. whereas natural disasters exacerbate problems of erosion, salination and desertification, undermine ecosystems and biodiversity, affect sustainable development and jeopardise social cohesion,
 - H. whereas natural disasters can also lead to significant displacement and loss of wildlife populations and domestic animals, causing distress to both the local communities and their dependent animals; whereas few response mechanisms exist,
 - I. whereas the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction claims that better urban planning in areas at risk and the preservation of ecosystems could reduce the impact of natural disasters,
 - J. whereas the Commission is a signatory to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, a phenomenon whose growth is mentioned in the UN Millennium Declaration, and whereas 2006 was declared International Year of Deserts and Desertification,
 - K. whereas the measures currently in force in the European Union have been shown to be insufficient or inadequate in terms of providing an effective response to natural disasters, and whereas the diversity of, and lack of coordination between, mechanisms and solutions which exist at national and regional level do not favour effective action,
 - L. whereas preventive measures, and measures to prepare and train crews, are important for putting out fires, as is the coordination of material and human resources for fire-fighting purposes,
 - M. whereas the number and scale of floods in Europe, including Central and Eastern Europe, has grown considerably; whereas efforts must be made to improve forecasting and prevention — including the regeneration of polders and coastal wetlands — and arrangements for warning the population of impending floods and ensuring that they are evacuated,
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- 1. Welcomes the growth in public awareness of and support for environmental measures to avert major disaster situations; proposes that measures to ensure more sustainable, rational and efficient use of water be taken within the European Union and especially in the most seriously affected areas and regions, and that major water consumers in agriculture, tourism, towns and industry be targeted by these measures; advocates the application of the “user pays” and “polluter pays” principles so as to guarantee a more rational use of water and better monitoring and inspection of effluents;
 - 2. Highlights the need to promote awareness-raising campaigns in respect of prevention, adoption of good practice and the publicising of procedures to be adopted in disaster situations such as fires and floods, to be funded by the European Social Fund or within the context of specific programmes such as Forest Focus; points out that action to train the public should pay special attention to training young people, starting with schoolchildren;
 - 3. Urges the Member States to increase their cooperation on civil protection at European Union level, so as to ensure availability of additional resources for rapid action to combat emergency situations;
 - 4. Calls on the Commission to include the construction of infrastructure and the acquisition of technical fire-fighting equipment, including airborne equipment, as expenditure qualifying for Community funding;

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5. Welcomes the Commission's action plan on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) for combating illegal logging, and the new financial instrument for the environment (Life+ programme), which is essential to the protection of Europe's forests and to preventing deterioration of all kinds, including fires;
6. Urges the Member States to reflect on the role of forests in the European Union, as part of a systematic set of land management measures including flood safety measures concentrating on more effective water retention and geological safety measures designed to stabilise slopes and carry out reafforestation wherever possible; proposes that a public debate be launched on their environmental, social and economic role, and that this debate be used to increase awareness of the existing disparities between Europe's forests and particularly the specific nature of Mediterranean forests; believes that there is a need to make better use of the Structural and Cohesion Funds for structural measures to prevent drought, the main aggravating factor in natural disasters; also believes that incentives should be provided for forest conservation and management of the countryside so as to establish a variety of uses (forestry, grazing, arable crops, irrigation, etc.); maintains that monoculture should be practised only in clearly circumscribed areas particularly well suited to the species concerned and the related economic activities, and that it is necessary for such systems to be based on good sense and for owners and producers to exercise their responsibilities scrupulously;
7. Invites the Commission to set serious, solidarity-based objectives within the joint legislative framework on tackling and preventing natural disasters, and particularly the adoption of the new Regulation on the Solidarity Fund and the Directive on assessing and managing floods and, furthermore, within the forthcoming revision of the Forest Focus programme, increasing funding and making the rules governing application more flexible;
8. Calls for support to enable affected areas to be reafforested, without damaging their bioclimate or ecological characteristics, and hopes that rehabilitation of the rural and urban landscape will be treated as a matter of particular importance, having due regard to specific local features;
9. Stresses the need to provide sufficient funding for conservation of the Natura 2000 network;
10. Believes that the reconstruction/restoration of the Natura 2000 network areas damaged by flooding, drought or fires should be financed by the Community Funds, given that these are important parts of Europe's green spaces which ensure biological diversity and the conservation of species; urges the Member States to establish national forest funds for forest disaster prevention and forest renewal;
11. Invites the Commission to ensure that future discussions on disaster relief and civil protection instruments also consider domestic animals and wildlife;
12. Calls on the Commission to submit a strategy on drought on which to base a European drought risk prevention and management policy;
13. Calls for severe drought to be included amongst the Solidarity Fund support mechanisms, since drought is an anomalous natural phenomenon, which develops slowly and is of variable duration, with serious, lasting repercussions on the living conditions and socioeconomic stability of the affected regions; recommends that the Fund maintain the possibility of supporting localised crisis situations (regional character) and make both public and private damage eligible;
14. Recommends the establishment of a European observatory on drought, desertification, floods and other effects of climate change in order to gather information and ensure a more effective response;
15. Recommends that preventive measures be implemented in the area of drought risk management, including strategies to minimise the resulting impacts, and incorporated into river basin management strategies;

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16. Recognises the need to investigate and develop new forms of fire prevention and detection and fire-fighting assistance using satellites and other cutting-edge technologies; believes that it is essential to adopt new information technologies (e.g. the Geographical Information System) for managing fires and floods; stresses the essential role of new detection technology in preventing natural disasters;

17. Recommends measures to protect forests against fire, specifically the collection and recycling of forest biomass residue, the prohibition of changing the use of burnt land, and sharper penalties for criminal acts against the environment, especially causing forest fires; believes that the collection of biomass residue should be regulated so as to prevent it from accelerating desertification by depleting organic matter and degrading the soil, thus making the latter more vulnerable to the risks of drought and torrential flooding;

18. Calls on the Commission to put forward a directive on preventing and managing fires, to include the regular collection of data, preparation of maps and identification of areas at risk, preparation of fire risk management plans, identification by the Member States of the resources allocated and facilities available, coordination of the various administrations, minimum requirements for training crews, establishment of environmental responsibility and penalties;

19. Asks the Commission to recommend to the Member States that they draw up fire and flood risk maps, and that these are taken into account in territorial planning management;

20. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

P6_TA(2006)0225

Treaty establishing the Energy Community

European Parliament resolution on the conclusion by the European Community of the Energy Community Treaty

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion by the European Community of the Energy Community Treaty (COM(2005)0435),
- having regard to the Council's draft decision on the conclusion by the European Community of the Energy Community Treaty (13886/1/2005),
- having regard to the legal basis chosen for the conclusion of the Energy Community Treaty, which effectively limits the role of the European Parliament to giving or withholding its assent to the conclusion of the Treaty, without any effective participation in the decision-making procedure,
- having regard to its position of 18 May 2006 on the proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion by the European Community of the Energy Community Treaty ⁽¹⁾ giving its assent to the conclusion of the Treaty,
- having regard to Rule 108(5) of its Rules of Procedure;

1. Notes that the EC, by means of the conclusion of this Energy Community Treaty (ECT), in a sense creates a precedent by extending the *acquis communautaire* of the internal market in the field of electricity and gas to the nine contracting parties to the ECT;

⁽¹⁾ *Texts Adopted*, P6_TA(2006)0219.