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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL AND THE  
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

**EU STRATEGY FOR SUPPORTING DISASTER RISK REDUCTION IN  
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Disasters undermine development and jeopardise the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Evidence has long suggested that disaster risk reduction (DRR) has a high cost-benefit ratio. The UN's International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) defines DRR as: "Actions taken to reduce the risk of disasters and the adverse impacts of natural hazards, through systematic efforts to analyse and manage the causes of disasters, including through avoidance of hazards, reduced social and economic vulnerability to hazards, and improved preparedness for adverse events".

The EU is the world's largest aid donor, but lacks a strategic framework to guide its DRR support to developing countries. This Communication proposes an EU strategy for supporting DRR in developing countries through both development cooperation and humanitarian aid, to help support the 2005 Hyogo Framework for Action<sup>1</sup> and achieve the MDGs.

Based on Article 180 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, this Strategy forms one half of a package covering aspects of DRR within<sup>2</sup> and beyond the EU, addressing also appropriate links between the two dimensions. It complements and supports existing EU initiatives on climate change.

## 2. RATIONALE

### 2.1. Disasters are on the increase – developing countries are most affected

Over the last 30 years, disasters have increased both in frequency and intensity. The total number reported rose from 73 in 1975 to about 440 in 2007. The number of climatic disasters has almost tripled, from 1280 between 1978 and 1987 to 3435 between 1998 and 2007.<sup>3</sup>

Disasters hit developing countries hardest, as they are the most vulnerable and have the least capacity to cope. For example, the 6.6 earthquake which hit Iran in 2003 killed over 40 000 people. By contrast, the 6.5 earthquake which hit central California four days earlier took two lives and injured 40 people.<sup>4</sup> Disasters also divert substantial national resources from development to relief, recovery and reconstruction, depriving the poor of the resources needed to escape poverty. In Aceh, Indonesia, the 2004 tsunami is estimated to have increased the proportion of people living below the poverty line from 30% to 50%.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, dependency on healthy animals and plants (crops) is high in developing countries, so that disasters caused by biological hazards can have negative impacts on food security and subsequently cause new disasters. For biological hazards it should also be kept in mind that incursions of diseases or pests if not adequately dealt with can easily become endemic, thereby impacting substantially the "economic" status of the country or region and hence the mid- and longer-term economic perspectives.

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction.

<sup>2</sup> Commission communication on a Community approach on the prevention of natural and man-made disasters (COM(2008)xx).

<sup>3</sup> Collaborating Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters.

<sup>4</sup> DFID (2006): Reducing the Risk of Disasters.

<sup>5</sup> Idem.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has found that some extreme weather events have changed in frequency and/or intensity.<sup>6</sup> These changes may already be contributing to the increasing number and intensity of disasters, making the need for effective DRR even greater and more immediate.

## 2.2. Investing in DRR pays off

Disasters can be avoided. There are ways to reduce risks and to limit impacts, for example by addressing the root causes of people's vulnerability and increasing their capacity to cope. DRR comprises preparedness, mitigation and prevention. It aims to enhance resilience to disasters and is underpinned by knowledge about how to manage risk, build capacity, and make use of information and communication technology and earth observation tools.

### *DRR success stories*

*The category four Hurricane Michelle in 2001 was the strongest hurricane to hit Cuba in 50 years. Thanks to Cuba's effective early warning system and its hurricane preparedness plan, 700 000 people were evacuated, of whom 270 000 were provided with temporary accommodation and basic needs for a longer time. Some 777 000 animals were moved to safe areas. The hurricane was a major economic setback, but only five deaths and 12 injuries were reported.*<sup>7</sup>

*In 1998 a tsunami struck the north-west coast of Papua New Guinea claiming 2 200 lives. Thanks to DRR efforts by the Asian Disaster Reduction Center following this disaster, a tsunami in 2000 destroyed thousands of houses but caused no deaths.*<sup>8</sup>

Effective DRR can reduce the loss of life and property. Studies suggest benefits in terms of prevented or reduced disaster impacts of two to four dollars for each dollar invested in DRR.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.3. International DRR efforts

In recent years, the focus has moved from mainly responding to disasters to implementing comprehensive DRR approaches. In 2005, 168 governments adopted the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the resilience of nations and communities to disaster* and the Commission<sup>10</sup> fully supports its implementation. The challenge now is to translate it into effective action at global, regional, national and local level. Many developing countries are putting considerable effort into implementation, but are constrained by lack of funding and capacity.<sup>11</sup> The 2nd Global Platform for DRR, to take place in June 2009, aims to sustain the Hyogo momentum and take stock of progress. Growing international awareness is evident from initiatives such as the World Bank's Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR).

Negotiations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in particular the Bali Action Plan adopted in 2007, have also identified DRR as a means of

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<sup>6</sup> IPCC (2007): 4th Assessment Report.

<sup>7</sup> ISDR (2004): Living with Risk: A global review of disaster reduction initiatives.

<sup>8</sup> ADRC (2001).

<sup>9</sup> DFID (2006): Reducing the Risk of Disasters.

<sup>10</sup> Only governments could adopt the Hyogo Framework, which is why the Commission has not formally adopted it.

<sup>11</sup> ISDR: Global Review 2007.

adapting to climate change in order to reduce its impact, and as an adjunct to long-term efforts to mitigate climate change.<sup>12</sup>

## 2.4. Grounds for EU action on DRR

Both the 2005 European Consensus on Development and the 2007 European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid commit the EU to supporting DRR policy and action. The 2008 Council conclusions on reinforcing the Union's disaster response capacity invited the Commission to present a proposal for an EU strategy for DRR in developing countries. The European Parliament has also repeatedly argued for a more robust DRR policy and increased financial means.

The majority of EU Member States and the Commission support DRR efforts in all developing country regions on a regular basis and good examples of EU coordination exist, for example in Bangladesh where the Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme 2010-2014 will be jointly supported by the EC and DFID. However, in spite of this, current EU action is non-strategic as it mainly follows an ad hoc project/programme approach and is often uncoordinated and inadequate. For example, in 10 years of intervention in disaster preparedness, especially through its DIPECHO programmes in six disaster-prone areas in the world, the Commission is aware of very few formal cooperation examples with Member States. It seems that the effectiveness of EU action is hampered by a number of factors:

- *Lack of policy and strategic frameworks on DRR.* While the Hyogo Framework provides harmonised DRR guidance, it is not readily usable for development cooperation purposes. For example, the regional context is barely mentioned in spite of the comparative advantage and economies of scale to be gained from regional action. Only the UK and Sweden (SIDA) has so far developed a specific DRR policy/strategy but other Member States are planning to do so. Indeed, some 10 Member States and the Commission are currently stepping up individual support for DRR. This will inevitably lead to more fragmentation and/or duplication of effort if there is no EU strategy to guide such efforts.
- *Lack of a common voice.* The EU currently lacks a common voice on DRR even though its thinking on DRR is clearly converging. DRR needs to be part of the political dialogue between the EU and developing countries and will be most effective if the EU's message is consistent and coordinated. For example, the lack of a distinct and coordinated EU presence at the 1st Global Platform on Disaster Reduction in 2007 was evident. The UNFCCC is another forum in which a coordinated EU position on DRR and climate change would be helpful.
- *Limited progress with the integration of DRR.* Given the risk that disasters pose to development, DRR needs to be better integrated into EU development cooperation. Such efforts are currently ongoing in several Member States and the Commission but progress so far has been uneven and limited and needs to be improved.<sup>13</sup>
- *Limited linking of DRR and climate change.* DRR is an essential part of successful adaptation to climate change and effective DRR increasingly needs to take

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<sup>12</sup> UNFCCC (2007), Bali Action Plan, decision 1/CP.13

<sup>13</sup> Tearfund (2007): Institutional donor progress with mainstreaming DRR.

account of the changes in risk associated with climate change. However, in practice, the benefits and synergies of linking DRR and adaptation are not systematically identified and capitalised upon.

All of the above suggests that an EU strategy supporting DRR in developing countries would give the EU the strategic direction it is currently lacking, while at the same time pulling together all ongoing EU DRR efforts, allowing benefits and synergies to be exploited in a more coherent and coordinated manner, including those related to policy coherence, non-duplication of effort, cost-effectiveness, efficiency and exchange of best practice.

### **3. TOWARDS AN EU STRATEGY FOR SUPPORTING DRR IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

The proposed strategy builds on strategic work done by the European Commission<sup>14</sup> and EU Member States, and DRR lessons learnt from all developing country regions. While the priority areas for intervention below are fully in line with the priorities of the Hyogo Framework, the strategy's overall objective, the strategic objectives and the implementation priorities specifically reflect the context of existing partnership and cooperation between the EU and developing countries, including at the regional level.

#### **3.1. Objectives**

The overall objective is to **contribute to sustainable development and poverty eradication by reducing the burden of disasters on the poor and the most vulnerable countries and population groups, by means of improved DRR.**

To achieve this overall objective, the EU will support the following strategic objectives:

- (1) support developing countries in integrating DRR considerations into their development policies and planning effectively;
- (2) support developing countries and societies in reducing disaster risk more effectively, through targeted action on disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness;
- (3) integrate DRR considerations more effectively into EU development and humanitarian aid policies and programming, and crisis response where it covers disaster response and recovery.

#### **3.2. Geographic coverage, scope and approach**

All developing countries<sup>15</sup> and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) are covered by the strategy, but particular attention will be given to disaster-prone regions, least developed and

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<sup>14</sup> Commission communications on Reinforcing the Union's disaster response capacity (COM(2008)130); Building a Global Climate Change Alliance between the European Union and poor developing countries most vulnerable to climate change (COM(2007)540); Reinforcing EU disaster and crisis response in third countries (COM(2005)153), the joint High Representative and Commission paper on Climate and international security (S113/08) and the Commission Staff Working Paper on Disaster Preparedness and Prevention (2003).

<sup>15</sup> OECD/DAC list of ODA recipients.

highly vulnerable countries and localities, and the most vulnerable groups.<sup>16</sup> Collaboration on DRR with the outermost regions will also be furthered.

The disasters targeted are those caused by natural<sup>17</sup> and technological hazards. However, different hazards can interact, resulting in a domino effect — e.g., environmental degradation increasing the impact of flooding, bringing on epidemics. A multi-hazard approach should therefore be adopted as appropriate, since it can lead to greater resilience to other types of disaster as well. While acknowledging that disasters can exacerbate existing tensions and instability, the strategy will not address man-made disasters such as conflict and war.<sup>18</sup> Consideration will be given to both slow- and rapid-onset disasters; to large-scale as well as localised but frequently occurring disasters such as landslides, flash floods, fires, storms, outbreaks of human and animal diseases and plant pests, bearing in mind that they may require different approaches.

The strategy combines support for the integration of DRR in EU external action and in developing countries' strategies, and targeted DRR action which can usefully complement integration efforts with great immediate impact. Examples include key DRR investment with good replication potential, such as specific DRR programmes or regional early warning systems. The regional dimension is crucial since disasters do not stop at borders. The EU will use its presence and experience at regional level to support action that is more effectively taken at regional level in line with the principles of comparative advantage and subsidiarity.

#### **4. PRIORITY AREAS FOR INTERVENTION**

##### **4.1. Ensure that DRR is a national and local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation**

Political commitment is key to advancing DRR issues at all levels. The EU will support developing countries taking the lead on DRR and implementing the Hyogo Framework, and will advocate DRR by increasing its visibility and demonstrating its benefits.

Implementing Hyogo also includes support for better integration of DRR into: (a) development and humanitarian policies and planning, (b) crisis response where disaster response and recovery are concerned, and (c) climate change adaptation strategies. Resources should be made available to support this in the Commission, EU Member States and developing countries.

Moreover, effective DRR needs a strong institutional basis, which can be made stronger through e.g. capacity building; good governance, promotion of appropriate policies and legislation; facilitating information; and effective coordination mechanisms. Multi-stakeholder dialogue should be formalised in National Platforms to provide policy guidance and coordinate activities. It is also important to strengthen the international system's capacity to act on international commitments and coordinating EU donor responses to maximise aid effectiveness.

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<sup>16</sup> To be further identified through risk analysis at the relevant levels and resulting vulnerabilities and specific needs.

<sup>17</sup> Biological, geophysical or hydro-meteorological.

<sup>18</sup> In such situations, linking DRR to crisis prevention and response efforts will be important.

***The EU will:***

- ▶ Promote the inclusion of DRR on the agenda of high-level political meetings and make it part of regular political dialogue with developing countries
- ▶ Support the integration of DRR into developing countries' development policies and planning, including relevant sectoral policies, climate change adaptation strategies and cross-cutting issues
- ▶ Better integrate DRR into EU policies, support strategies, programmes and projects
- ▶ Support the development and implementation of national policy, legal and institutional frameworks for DRR, including National and Regional Platforms
- ▶ Ensure closer coordination of support for DRR in developing countries to help implement this strategy
- ▶ Support the UN/ISDR as the coordinating body for the implementation of the Hyogo Framework

**4.2. Identify, assess, and monitor disaster risks – and enhance early warning**

Better knowledge of hazards, particularly in the context of increasing climate variability and vulnerability or the huge increase in global trade in live animals and products, enables communities and countries to better understand, anticipate and minimise the risk of disasters and should be fed into policy making.

Current analytical gaps make it necessary to better map and strengthen risk analysis capacity, promote integrated vulnerability and capacity assessment, upgrade data monitoring stations and reliable early warning (EW) capacity, and promote joint post damage and needs assessment (PDNA)<sup>19</sup> in order to develop DRR strategies and measures appropriate to the unique circumstances of the people at risk and strengthen resilience. Capacity building and instruments to ensure that EW will go 'the last mile' to benefit the communities and people most at risk will be vital in this process.

Expanded research and statistical capacity and dissemination of results related to DRR are key to bridging this gap. The EU has significant research capacity, including the 7th Framework Programme for Research and the Joint Research Centre, which supports tools such as Kopernikus that should contribute to and complement developing countries' own efforts. The EU will ensure that appropriate linkages are made with knowledge consolidation initiatives explored within the context of the Communication on a Community approach on the prevention of natural and manmade disasters.

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<sup>19</sup> UN/WB/EC common Platform for action for "Post-Crisis Assessments and Recovery Planning" in post disasters (PDNA) scenarios.



***The EU will:***

- ▶ Support expanded research (scientific, technological and socio-economic) and statistical capacity in developing countries
- ▶ Promote the establishment of multi-hazard national risk assessment and the sharing of risk information and knowledge
- ▶ Promote joint PDNA with WB and UN in support to nationally led assessment to enhance country resilience to crises
- ▶ Support participatory community risk assessment and link it to national and regional assessment
- ▶ Promote the exchange of best practice, ideas and experience both between developing countries and between developing and developed countries
- ▶ Support the development or strengthening of EW systems, including people-centred EW, and related capacity building

**4.3. Use knowledge, innovation, and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels**

Disasters can be reduced substantially if people are well informed about the risk they may face and about possible options and measures they can take to reduce vulnerability and better prepare themselves.

Public awareness of DRR can be heightened by disseminating disaster risk information to relevant authorities and local populations in order to empower people to protect themselves and make their livelihoods more resilient to disasters. The media can play an important role. Children, in particular, can also be made aware of DRR by including DRR material in formal, non-formal and informal education and training activities and providing easy access to information on disaster risk and means of protection.

Support for implementing market based insurance mechanisms can also be a tool to improve public awareness of disaster risks and should give incentives to risk reducing behaviour.

***The EU will:***

- ▶ Support awareness-raising campaigns and programmes
- ▶ Support the inclusion of DRR in education and training
- ▶ Help make DRR information more easily available, particularly to people in high-risk areas
- ▶ Support the development or up-scaling of community-based disaster risk management programmes, including the use of market based insurance mechanisms

**4.4. Reduce the underlying risk factors**

Vulnerability to hazards is increased by many factors: e.g. poverty, poor land-use planning and unsafe settlements, rapid population growth, increasing population densities and rapid urbanisation, poor governance, lack of social and financial safety-nets, poor health and disability, poor natural resource management, environmental degradation, gender inequalities,

food insecurity, increasing climate change and the fact that more people are living today in exposed areas.

The EU will support the linkage between DRR and these various issues with a view to making all EU support more coherent and disaster-resilient while taking advantage of possible synergies. In particular, the EU will ensure that appropriate linkages are made with natural resources and environmental programmes, including initiatives such as the GCCA, the joint EC-SEC paper on “Climate Change and International Security”<sup>20</sup> and the EU Action Plan on climate and development<sup>21</sup>. Linking DRR and climate change adaptation can have many benefits in terms of non-duplication of effort and institutions.

***The EU will:***

- ▶ Support the integration of DRR into issues that constitute an underlying risk factor for disasters
- ▶ Seek ways to more explicitly and harmoniously link DRR and adaptation objectives
- ▶ Support integrated programmes or projects addressing DRR and multiple issues identified as compound risk factors (e.g. DRR / climate adaptation / food security)
- ▶ Explore how innovative funding can be mobilised for the benefit of both DRR and adaptation

#### **4.5. Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels**

Preparedness may involve many types of activities, such as contingency planning, stockpiling of equipment and supplies, emergency services and standby arrangements, communications, information management and coordination arrangements, capacity building in communities at risk and their institutions, personnel training, community drills and exercises, and public education.

Preparedness activities also link naturally with response and recovery activities. In this sense they provide a good opportunity for ensuring coherence between disaster management activities, often falling within the remit of civil protection organisations and to ensure coherence and complementarity between the humanitarian and development spheres for example through developing or expanding national capacity to conduct post-disaster damage and needs assessments and to prepare plans for recovery and reconstruction from a DRR perspective.

Effective preparedness plans and organization also help to cope with the many small and medium-sized disasters that repeatedly occur in so many communities. Support for enabling communities to help themselves in the event of a disaster and financial preparedness in order to be able to absorb the effects of a disaster without creating undue macro-economic or budgetary problems is vital for sustainable poverty reduction. Governments could provide incentives/support to promote responsible corporate behaviour and public-private partnerships, which are particularly important to developing (affordable) insurance mechanisms against disasters.

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<sup>20</sup> (S113/08)

<sup>21</sup> Council document 15164/04.

***The EU will:***

- ▶ Support community-based preparedness programmes
- ▶ Support the development of preparedness and contingency plans that are informed by the latest risk assessments
- ▶ Promote the integration of DRR into disaster response and recovery processes
- ▶ Promote risk sharing and transfer mechanisms

## **5. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY**

### **5.1. Implementation priorities**

The EU will support the full implementation of the strategy making use of its wide experience with DRR. However, it is suggested that a quick start be made in the below areas where the EU has a comparative advantage:

- *Political dialogue on DRR.* The EU will launch a political dialogue on DRR with all developing regions and countries in existing fora, including in support of advancing climate change negotiations on a UNFCCC post-2012 arrangement. The EU will further aim for a coordinated presence at the 2nd Global Platform for DRR in June 2009.
- *Regional Action Plans on DRR.* The EU will support the development and implementation of DRR action plans in disaster-prone regions. These could be implemented partly by up-scaling existing EU DRR projects and programmes, building on developing countries' strategies and priorities. They should also complement and support adaptation initiatives such as the GCCA. It is suggested to start with an Action Plan for the Caribbean to support *inter alia* the implementation of the Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy<sup>22</sup>. Others should follow, e.g. for Latin America, South-East Asia, Africa and the Pacific.
- *Integration of DRR into EU and developing country policies and planning and support for key national DRR investment.* The EU will integrate DRR into EU development cooperation, humanitarian response and recovery efforts, making full use of best integration practice and tools developed by the Commission and individual Member States, including those for the environment and climate change and civil protection authorities. The Commission will use the next mid-term review of country and regional strategy papers as an entry point for having DRR considerations fully integrated in its development assistance, where appropriate, in the next programming cycle starting in 2012.
- The EU will also support the integration of DRR into developing countries' national policies and planning, including relevant sector policies and strategies,

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<sup>22</sup> The Eastern Caribbean countries are among the 10 most disaster-prone countries in the world. An Action Plan for the Caribbean should also be closely linked to the implementation of the Cariforum–EU Declaration on Climate Change and Energy (05/08).

particularly Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), disaster-sensitive sectors, and relevant cross-cutting issues. The EU will coordinate its support for key DRR investment already identified and planned for in such national frameworks.

## **5.2. EU collaboration, complementarity and coordination**

The EU will implement the strategy in the spirit of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the EU code of conduct on division of labour: building on active coordination mechanisms; increasing EU policy dialogue on DRR in developing countries while supporting national and local ownership striving to bridge institutional gaps that exist between DRR as a development, a humanitarian and a climate change issue; actively promoting strong in-country and regional coordination between donors and governments with particular emphasis on EU coordination and harmonising methodologies.

At headquarters, the EU will coordinate its efforts with other major policy-setting processes, instruments and programmes<sup>23</sup>, both across the EU and working with regional and international organisations, non-EU donors, international and community NGOs, the Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, the World Bank, the UN and the ISDR system.

To take forward the political dialogue on DRR, oversee the implementation of the strategy and foster coordination and alignment of EU support, the Commission will set up an EU DRR Steering Group (SG) including the Commission and EU Member States. This SG will:

- In 2009, develop an Implementation Plan to clarify the key actions, responsibilities, main instruments and the sequencing of implementation for the priorities listed in para 5.1. In 2011, review this in order to take forward implementation of the remainder of the Strategy.
- Promote the setting up of DRR networks in disaster-prone countries and regions to exchange information and experience and promote opportunities for collaboration and enhanced implementation of the Strategy.
- Establish a forum for regular consultation and exchange with civil society, NGOs and national and regional representatives.
- Establish an appropriate framework to monitor progress and financing, and evaluate the implementation of the strategy.

## **5.3. EU funding instruments<sup>24</sup>**

The EU will implement the strategy using the full range of funding instruments at its disposal and in the context of the EU target of raising Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 0.56% of GNP by 2010<sup>25</sup>. Indeed, several Member States and the Commission<sup>26</sup> are currently scaling up funding for DRR within existing financial frameworks. Although the present communication does not have any additional financial implications and the actions will be

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<sup>23</sup> Such as the WB's GFDRR and UNDP-led disaster reduction and country climate adaptation efforts.

<sup>24</sup> Annex II.

<sup>25</sup> Target reconfirmed in Doha 2008.

<sup>26</sup> Commitments in 2006 : €39.95 million, and in 2007: €65.06 million, from Dipecho, Greater Horn of Africa and EDF resources.

financed within the existing financial framework 2007-2013, it provides the framework for ensuring that existing instruments are complementary and are used to best effect, including better inter-linking of DRR funding from development and humanitarian instruments.

As to the EC, its main funding sources include the European Development Fund (EDF) and instruments of the EC general budget<sup>27</sup>. Individual DRR allocations are set out in Country and Regional Strategy Papers for all developing regions, intra-ACP programmes, Drought Preparedness and DIPECHO programmes in the humanitarian aid context, and in thematic programmes on food security and environment/natural resources. For example, €180 million has been proposed to be allocated to DRR under 10<sup>th</sup> EDF intra-ACP resources.<sup>28</sup> The Commission will explore a better integrated articulation between the above. The 7<sup>th</sup> Research Framework Programme (FP7) and the Commission's Joint Research Centre also support a substantial amount of hazard- and disaster-related research and tools.

The EU will also explore ways of mobilising innovative funding, additional to existing ODA, for the benefit of both DRR and climate change adaptation. The Global Climate Financing Mechanism, currently being developed by the Commission, could be one such instrument.

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<sup>27</sup> Instruments for: i) development cooperation, ii) humanitarian aid, iii) stability, iv) European Neighbourhood and Partnership.

<sup>28</sup> Multi-annual intra-ACP programme to be adopted in February 2009.