

**IDRC DAVOS 2008**  
**PARALLEL SESSION ON “NETWORKING OF NATIONAL PLATFORMS**  
**ON REGIONAL LEVEL” ( Room Aspen 1, 28 August 2008, 10.30 to 12.00)**

**PRESENTATION BY PHILIPPE BOULLE , AFPCN, - 2<sup>nd</sup> speaker**

KARL OTTO ZENTEL has just presented an impressive list of joint actions successfully undertaken by the network of European Platforms formed between the national platforms for DDR of Switzerland, Germany and France.

1. This is a proof of the synergy obtained when a network of platforms willing to cooperate together is formed. Working together on these European issues has resulted in:

- avoiding duplication of efforts,
- in obtaining through consultations among partners a better understanding of the issues at stake,
- in shaping up a common position,
- and in having proposals with more weight vis a vis the E.U directorates concerned.

The position expressed by a network brings in more visibility for each of the members than individual positions that would have been taken by each member.

2. This is of course a statement of the general benefits brought to our three Platforms by working as a network; it has to be completed by more specific elements that explain its success:

A. Our network works well because it is a voluntary association of platforms. It is not a forced, mandatory geographical grouping of countries from the same sub region that have been lumped together because they are neighbours and have to work together although they do not have the willingness and do not see any advantage to do so.

B. Secondly, no additional administrative structure was created to oversee the work of the network. The presidency of the network uses its own structure to administer and lead the members : this is therefore very cost effective.

C. The third reason for success is the flexibility of members to discuss and decide together about activities and common positions to be taken : every member carries the same weight and will never be forced to adopt an approach it does not adhere to.

In short, the success of a network as we see it depends on the willingness of members to work together and in the trust they put in each other.

3. There are three other important issues to be highlighted to explain why our network of platforms is successful.

The first one is that there is no need to have comparable institutional structures to be able to work efficiently together. It is a wrong assumption to believe that government-led structures and civil society-led structures cannot work together and cannot express a common position that carries weight towards third parties. What count is the relevance and justness of the common position arrived at. If we look at our network, in France, we have a platform composed of two entities, one being the MEEDDAT, and the other being AFPCN, a civil society organisation which acts as the operator of the platform. And we work extremely well within the European

network with the German DKKV- civil society- and the Swiss Planat- a parliamentary commission. So, structure has no impact at all on effective cooperation.

This leads to the second aspect: our network does not – and no network should- substitute itself for its government. Network positions do not reflect governments positions, unless the government concerned endorses the network's position. Again, I repeat, it is the relevance, reliability and justness of the position expressed by the network that will decide on its standing with international instances.

The third aspect is clear : the network must have a purpose, i.e, network members must set for themselves common goals and common objectives and sketch a work plan. And this is exactly what was done in case of our network. For example, we decided to regularly circulate news on our own network among ourselves, to organise specific events or conferences on specific topics, for which one platform is in the lead position, and the others assist in the organisation and participate in the event and conference. Example of the current exercise on the twinning of platforms by the Swiss; the December conference of Divonne les Bains on prevention and response, DKKV's lead on response to the Green Paper, the December conference in Paris on the challenges of climate change.

**4.** In concluding this short presentation, I wish to raise a last point : why do we talk of the need for and do we focus on national platforms? Are there not in each country government structures that deal with DDR and are able to communicate and work together with equivalent structures in other countries? Well, platforms perform two important functions which the previous IDNDR national committees did not cover. First, they are meant to bring together all the services that deal within each country with the complete chain of risk, from prevention to response to reconstruction : a piecemeal approach to risk reduction is not going to meet with success.

Secondly, a platform is meant to bring together all stakeholders in disaster reduction – from government to civil society, passing through private sector firms and also the security sector.

Indeed a high objective in both cases. This is why we have to push for this indispensable concept of national platforms to make a dent into effective disaster risk reduction.