



French Association
for the Prevention of
Natural Disasters

Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

"From past natural disasters to the challenge of climate change in Europe"

Paris, November 26 – 28, 2008

Appendix

Conclusions on Knowledge and policy tools

Preamble

The AFPCN Scientific Council is composed of independent experts from France and other countries, operating as a network. The Council prepares publications such as the blue paper on adaptation to climate change, a copy of which was provided to participants at the conference.

Several members of the Council (Mssrs Favier, Décamps, Wagner, Michel-Kerjan, Drobenko and Bourrelrier) as well as moderators from the five workshops representing partner scientific and technical centres (BRGM, CEPRI, CEMAGREF, CERTU and EISTI) spoke at the conference. The Scientific Council also benefited from the support of the *Académie des Sciences* and international organisations (WMO, UNESCO).

The council met on November 28 prior to the afternoon session, which enabled the chairman to speak subsequently to participants on behalf of the Council as a whole on four main topics:

1° Agreement on the main findings

1-1. Concerning disaster risk reduction, the views expressed by different speakers' converged on the fact that we do not know everything but that we nevertheless know a lot about DRR and we already have tools in place as well as experience in using such tools. However, the main issues for consideration remain:

- how to put disaster risk reduction back on the political agenda (the issue of governance)
- how to genuinely and systematically involve industry as well as local and regional authorities
- how to take action on individual behaviour in terms of explaining, communicating and educating.

1-2. There was also significant agreement on the fact that the issues of DRR and adapting to climate change had areas of overlap, for example in terms of the requirement for a strategy and the long-term perspective, which does not mean that there is confusion between the two. It is therefore necessary to work in a concerted manner, since climate change serves to trigger and highlight the insufficiency of measures taken to date as well as the worrying growth of vulnerabilities.

1-3. There is a recognised need to define and implement integrated policies at regional level. However, the diversity and complexity of circumstances means that we need to present the problems in a new way and define priorities in order to break the deadlock.

1-4. As a result, there is a need to stress the following:

- exchanges of experience, lessons learnt and joint pilot demonstrations,
- improving communication, specifically through the development of local debate and a system of bottom-up feedback,
- developing and testing strategies in situations of great uncertainty.

2° Essential fields and disciplines

2.1- Action should focus on updating knowledge on an ongoing basis; it should be adjusted to changing circumstances.

Effective measurement methods as well as implementing, maintaining and making reliable data banks available to users in an appropriate fashion (specifically through mapping) are still the bases of effective risk management and knowledge. European research programmes are helping to organise networks and compare methodologies in fields such as flooding. Work should be extended to other hazards and carried out over time so that trends due to climate change and the modification of society's activities are reflected in the data.

2.2- More sophisticated management tools must be developed and tested for efficacy

Economic strategy models for situations of great uncertainty should be developed and inter-comparisons, carried out.

It is necessary to test and improve the application of Hyogo protocol principles and implementation tools on a regular basis.

In particular, early warning systems should be developed and shared more extensively. They should also be made more generally accessible.

2.3- The human and social sciences are still insufficiently applied.

Deliberations and debate on risk perception and decision-making tools are essential. Resilience is a key area, which is based in particular on individuals' and systems' capacity for autonomy. It needs to find new areas of application so that people can take ownership of it and it can be developed. It must therefore combine different disciplines relating to the concept of risk prevention.

Debate with partners from developing countries opens up productive perspectives, and the development of such partnerships is strongly recommended.

2.4- Examples of governance through public-private partnerships show the extent of progress that is possible in line with the specific features of the European context

3° Major areas for vulnerability studies and action strategies

The five workshops confirmed the relevance of chosen topics, and specific recommendations led to them being categorised in three groups:

3-1. cross-border rivers and mountainous areas are more consistent zones, which are already linked, specifically for crisis management purposes. Progress should involve the development of strategies and better communication, in particular using joint standards and tools,

3-2. the coastline on one hand and urban areas on the other are two very different regional divisions that both involve significant stakes and give rise to complex and specific problems. For these regions, progress should involve setting out a general methodological approach supported by the development of more systematic debate.

3-3. the training workshop referred to convergence between various stakeholders (local and regional authorities, central governments, the European Commission) on the notion of establishing a strong and dynamic training network on risks at European level.

4° European level

The European aspect brings definite added value due to the diversity of circumstances and cultures, which are its major asset, as well as a range of dimensions through which it can tackle problems and mobilise resources.

a) The scientific interface should be activated in such a way so as to encourage the establishment of scientific networks around the different platforms. By way of example, the AFPCN Scientific Council will request that platforms in the network put forward members or correspondents, which will help it to keep up to date with demands.

b) The EU should provide strong backing to the movement which was first initiated via a number of programmes under the Commission's DG for Research.