

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

## **Conference report and summary of decisions**

The conference was held within the context of the French presidency of the European Union (EU) and hosted by the French Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in association with the German and Swiss platforms. It brought together participants from 17 EU countries, four other European countries and a few countries from outside Europe as well as representatives from European institutions and the United Nations.

These experts and representatives took a significant part in the debate.

The conference was opened and closed by Laurent Michel, Director-General of Risk Prevention at the Ministry for Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development, and Town and Country Planning (MEEDDAT), with the support of Senator Yves Dauge, President of AFPCN (the French Association for the Prevention of Natural Disasters) and representatives of the French Platform including public authority and civil society stakeholders.

In her speech during the opening session, Ms Nathalie Kosciusco-Morizet, French Secretary of State for Ecology, discussed the general policy of the French Government's action in the area of risk prevention and climate change and spoke about the main features of her ministry's reorganization as well as the reasons for convening the conference. In particular, she emphasised that, alongside global efforts aiming to mitigate the effects of climate change, it was important to move forwards in terms of adaptation to climate change.

Officers from the Directorates-General of the European Commission for the environment and research, the French ministries for Foreign Affairs and of the Interior, UN ISDR (the

International Strategy for Disaster Reduction) and the Council of Europe (CoE) made presentations during the afternoon session on Wednesday 26 November and at the morning session on Friday 28 November.

Representatives of regional authorities and civil society had the opportunity to express their views during the sessions together with experts in various disciplines.

The morning session on Thursday 27 November, which was chaired by Ms Irmgard Schwaetzer (DKKV), consisted in presentations on risk reduction activities by the national Swiss, German, French, Swedish and Czech platforms and led to discussions on the development of partnerships between the platforms, including through a network of European Platforms in 2007 by the first three above named organizations. The Rt Hon John Prescott councillor from the Council of Europe, formerly British deputy prime minister, also contributed to the debate.

Various sessions and workshops were held over the course of the three days outlining the physical, historical and future context in Europe. Participants addressed the issue of adapting to risks associated with climate change in the most vulnerable areas (coastline, mountains, cross-border rivers and urban areas) and discussed educational and economic tools and partnerships between public authorities (central governments and regional authorities encore une fois “regional” peut vouloir dire trop de choses et si l’on veut faire référence à Londres il faut ajouter” “such as the Greater London Authority”) and insurers. Resilience, which refers to the overall capacity to resist and react in disastrous circumstances with a view to maintaining sustainable development, was discussed at a roundtable combining a range of views.

The attached appendix summarises the main, and quite distinct, conclusions from different stages of the conference. These range from the summary of the platforms session presented by Philippe Boullé – former director of the UN’s International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) – to conclusions in the area of knowledge, research and policy tools provided by Paul-Henri Bourrelier, who spoke on behalf of the AFPCN Scientific Council as its chairman.

Based on these statements, Laurent Michel (Director-General of Risk Prevention, MEEDDAT) in his concluding remarks placed particular emphasis on convergence between the methods, the institutional set up and the use of research. He also discussed the issue of sharing tools and, consequently, breathing life into the European dimension, specifically via national platforms and the network of European Platforms. He also stressed the importance of local and regional action.

The French Platform drew the following conclusions:

1° - National platforms, which were established according to principles reflecting the diversity of modes of governance in the various European countries, are an effective basis for debate and collaboration both between the different platforms and between those platforms and European institutions (the EU and the CoE) as well as multilateral institutions (ISDR, WMO, UNESCO, etc.) Partnerships do not exclude countries which have not (yet) created platforms and in many cases, relations have already been established between them and existing platforms.

2° Ms Irmgard Schwaetzer ,Chairperson of DKKV (the German Committee for Disaster Reduction), which currently occupies the rotating presidency of a European network formed in April 2007 by the German, Swiss and French platforms, presented a report on the network that was unanimously judged encouraging. Following on from this, a series of meetings were organised for subsequent weeks to encourage further debate, in particular on points 4 and 7 below.

3° - The Czech platform confirmed that it had joined the network, and the Swedish platform signalled its intention to join in due course. The three founding platforms, demonstrating that they were conscious of the benefits of enlargement, were very happy to welcome them both. They were also open to expressions of interest from further prospective members.

4° - Representatives of the European Commission's Directorates-General provided information on communications currently being drawn up for publication in the first few months of 2009 under the Czech presidency of the EU. Platforms and networks will take part in a concerted manner in consultations and requests for views and opinions, according to a schedule to be devised by the presidency as part of a voluntary and constructive process.

5° - France pointed out that it was preparing to take over the presidency of the network in April 2009 with the intention of actively continuing along the lines mapped out by the German platform, while maintaining the principle of a network operating without a dedicated administrative structure additional to existing national ones.

6° - In line with the conclusions on mutual reinforcement and interlinking of disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation issues (see appendix) and in response to the wishes of the ISDR director, Salvano Briceno, governments will take steps to include national platforms in national delegations which will negotiate the terms of the new international climate convention from December 2008.

7°- The platforms and the European Network will actively contribute to the UNISDR Global Platform meeting in June 2009 in Geneva.

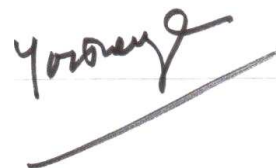
Paris, le 18 décembre 2008

For the French platform



Laurent Michel

Director-General of Risk Prevention  
Responsible for major hazards  
MEEDDAT



Yves Dauge

President of the AFPCN  
Senator of Indre et Loire