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Subject:	Council Conclusions on the comprehensive enhancement of the EU's resilience against flooding

Delegations will find in annex Conclusions on the comprehensive enhancement of the EU's resilience against flooding, as approved by the Council (Justice and Home Affairs) at its 4068th meeting held on 12 December 2024.

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON THE COMPREHENSIVE ENHANCEMENT OF THE EU'S RESILIENCE AGAINST FLOODING

1. **Recalling** the Council Conclusions on Integrated Flood Management within the European Union, adopted on 12 May 2011¹, and acknowledging that they remain fundamentally pertinent, but require supplementations and updates on several key points;
2. **Underlining** that Europe is both experiencing a large number of natural disasters exacerbated by climate change, including floods, as well as serious security challenges and therefore calling for resilience building measures from an all-hazard and whole-of-society approach;
3. **Emphasising** the risks posed by the effects of climate change and in particular by floods and the increasing need to protect people, the environment, property, including cultural heritage and the economy;
4. **Emphasising** the intensification of precipitation events and the increase in the frequency and volume of single-day and multi-day heavy precipitation as well as further sea level rise and changes in storm patterns attributable to climate change, will increase the frequency and severity of coastal flooding in Europe, with potentially devastating impacts² on Europe's population, infrastructure and economic activities. In addition, also the risk of compound flooding arising from the concurrence of high sea levels and heavy precipitation will also increase;

¹ 9241/11

² AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023; European climate risk assessment (EEA Report 01/2024)

5. **Recognising** that soil degradation leading to reduced soil permeability increases the risk of flooding in river basins, Increased rainfall intensity after prolonged dry spells can lead to high volumes of surface runoff as dry soils in some cases become less permeable, unable to infiltrate large amounts of water. This increased surface runoff can lead to flooding, soil erosion, damage to property and risks to human life;
6. **Recalling** the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 2015, which, inter alia, promotes the mainstreaming of disaster risk management in areas prone to flooding, aiming to enhance the resilience of persons, communities, countries and their assets, as well as the environment;
7. **Having regard** to Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood risks³ (hereinafter the "Floods Directive"), and the implementation assessments carried out by the Commission⁴;
8. **Recalling** the findings of the 2016 "Report of the Netherlands Presidency on the main achievements at EU level in the field of civil protection⁵," specifically the chapter on "Prevention of Floods" and the findings of the JRC Technical Report "Adapting to rising coastal flood risk in the EU under climate change" (2020)⁶, which advocates for appropriate risk reduction measures to lessen the effects of future climate change along the EU coastline;

³ OJ L 288, 6.11.2007, p. 27–34

⁴ See: [Floods - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/floods/)

⁵ 10019/16

⁶ <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC118512>

9. **Emphasising** that floods represent one of the key natural risks across the European Union,⁷ with significant socio-economic consequences exacerbated by climate change,⁸ rapid urbanization, soil sealing, ecosystem degradation;
10. **Highlighting** the necessity to further enhance the cooperation between civil protection and flood risk management authorities⁹, and other actors including in the private sector, to bolster mutual awareness, reinforce synergies and implement lessons identified, as also concluded at the joint workshop on links between civil protection and flood risk management, held in Stockholm during the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2023¹⁰;
11. **Recalling** that spatial planning and sustainable land management practices represents a proactive approach to ensuring the sustainability and cost-effectiveness of preventive flood risk management measures;
12. **Recognising** that climate change constitutes a multi-level (e.g. global, national, regional as well as cross border) risk factor and therefore a challenge for many EU Member States and it will inevitably become a predominant risk factor in the 21st century, acknowledging the findings of the Council conclusions on civil protection work in view of climate change¹¹ adopted under the French Presidency of the Council, as well as the risk preparedness and climate resilience aspects of the Council Conclusions adopted under the Belgian Presidency of the Council¹²;

⁷ Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on Progress on implementation of article 6 of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (Decision No 1313/2013/EU): Preventing and managing disaster risk in Europe, 12 March 2024, COM(2024) 130 final

⁸ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Managing climate risks – protecting people and prosperity, 12 March 2024, COM(2024) 91 final

⁹ Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood risks, recital 7

¹⁰ [32nd Working Group on Floods: Civil Protection and Flood Risk Management Workshop Report, 10-11 May 2023](#)

¹¹ 7146/2022

¹² Council conclusions on the 8th Environment Action Programme Med-term review – The way forward to a green, just and inclusive transition for a sustainable Europe, 11326/24

13. **Bearing** in mind the need for Member States to prioritize flood risk management **in the framework of planning, preparedness, mitigation and incident management** and to further strengthen the management of pluvial, flash and coastal floods to reduce the adverse consequences thereof;
14. **Bearing** in mind that damages from coastal flooding are projected to rise sharply with global warming for all EU countries with a coastline, unless additional coastal protection and risk-reduction measures are implemented. The vast majority of these impacts could be avoided through mitigation and adaptation measures, aimed at increasing the resilience of future coastal societies to flooding;
15. **Recognising** the need for the relevant institutions of the European Union and the Member States to be better prepared for the more frequent occurrence of floods, including coastal flooding and sea-level rise, requiring operational protection interventions as a result of climate change and which are also exacerbated by changes in ecosystem and land use, especially deforestation and urbanisation;
16. **Emphasising** the need to draw on the experience of major floods throughout the European Union and its neighbouring countries, in terms of prevention, preparedness response and recovery, particularly in view of the devastation they have caused to people, the environment, property, including cultural heritage, and to biodiversity, and their increasing occurrence and severity combined with a lack of predictability, and to further develop post-disaster lessons learnt at the European level on all aspects of flood risk assessment and management;

17. **Taking into account** the “Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions on European Union Disaster Resilience Goals: Acting together to deal with future emergencies”¹³, the Commission Recommendation of 8 February 2023 on Union Disaster Resilience Goals¹⁴ and the first Progress report on article 6 UCPM Decision “Preventing and managing disaster risk in Europe”¹⁵;
18. **Underlining** the importance of building on past experience and developing resilience, and the added value at European level of stocktaking on key issues related to flood risk management, in particular the meeting on flood prevention held in Brussels (Belgium) under the Dutch Presidency of the Council in February 2016, the UCPM Lessons Learnt meeting on wildfires and floods held in Rome in 2023 and the civil protection workshop on flood safety experiences in the European region held in Budapest (Hungary) under the Hungarian Presidency of the Council in July 2024;
19. **Emphasising** the ways to tackle disinformation and misinformation and the filtering of manipulated messages, news, misleading and deceptive content i.e., fake news, by strengthening risk and crisis communication;

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20. **Stresses** the need to provide the citizens and the businesses in the European Union with adequate information on flood risk, notably the European Climate Risk Assessment report, to raise public awareness through education, training, public communication, and to increase the preparedness level of the citizens, businesses and providers of infrastructure;

¹³ COM(2023) 61 final of 8 February 2023

¹⁴ 2023/C 56/01, OJ C 56, 15.2.2023, p. 1–11

¹⁵ Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on Progress on implementation of article 6 of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (Decision No 1313/2013/EU): Preventing and managing disaster risk in Europe, 12 March 2024, COM(2024) 130 final

21. **Emphasises** the necessity to be prepared for the likelihood of more frequent and more severe floods as a result of climate change, which may cause significant damage, requiring strengthened management of flood risk on major rivers and small watercourses, as well as in the inland and coastal inhabited areas affected by coastal flooding - due to sea level rise - and storm surges as well as compound flooding arising from the concurrence of high sea levels and heavy precipitation;
22. **Underlines** that, as a consequence of climate change, Member States and EU institutions need to be prepared to deal with large-scale, cross-sectoral, and transboundary disasters, and that the societal resilience must be increased. A coherent, proactive and systemic approach to flood risk management is needed to enhance resilience to the consequences of climate change at all stages of the disaster management cycle;
23. **Recognises** that the occurrence of floods and droughts are natural phenomenon influenced by human actions (such as climate change, development of settlements, construction of infrastructure), and that the management of water resources needs to take into account local factors along with the relationship between the dual challenges of droughts and floods on the water cycle;
24. **Highlights** that developments in flood protection must be economically rational to achieve the greatest possible reduction in risk with available resources thereby reducing the extent of civil protection's consequence management tasks. Recalls that while fulfilling their obligations under the EU Floods Directive, the Member States' efforts and measures must be based on scientific evidence, and build further on the synergies of research and other scientific initiatives in the area of flood risk management, while strengthening the competitiveness of the European Union;

25. **Stresses** that ecological and sustainability considerations must be taken into account as far as possible in the design of flood defence infrastructures to minimize environmental impact. Significant emphasis must be placed on risk prevention by water retention, better management of run-off, increased groundwater recharge by infiltration, increasing storage capacity, and making better use of the water storage capacity in all ecosystems and promotion of nature based solutions in urban and rural settings, where appropriate;
26. **Stresses** the need to speed up the process of planning, regulating and implementing large-scale river basin management measures to preserve and enhance the natural capacity of rivers to store water where possible in the flood plain at peak flows (giving more room to the river) and to discharge flood flows. This must take account of ecological considerations and be carried out without increasing flood risks in upstream and downstream areas. The need of planning, regulating and implementing large scale river basin management measures also pertains to low-lying coastal areas;
27. **Promotes** the application of nature-based solutions to alleviate flooding by slowing the flow, through the use of natural water retention measures, where appropriate, in flood plains and groundwater infiltration, while taking into account the Water Framework Directive¹⁶ and the River Basin Management Plans;

¹⁶ OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1

28. **Underlines** the need to further strengthen cross-border and transnational cooperation in the management of flood events in the whole flood management cycle. Moreover underlines the need to enhance coordination and solidarity in transboundary river basins that connect the border regions of Member States as well as in coastal areas to increase resilience, in line with the Floods Directive and international principles of water management as developed notably under the United Nations Convention on the protection and use of transboundary water courses and international lakes;
29. While recognising the existing international cooperation at river basin level and in coastal areas (e.g. ICPDR¹⁷ and FSGK¹⁸), **highlights** the necessity to further develop and improve the effectiveness of the monitoring system for flood forecasting and flood alerts, including cooperation in cross-border river-basins, while ensuring the availability of data, and to link global early warning systems with local flood risk management in Europe;
30. **Acknowledges** the risk that floods pose to human health, both the increased risk of infectious diseases and the impact on mental and physical well-being and **underlines** the need to plan and implement resilience building of European health systems in line with flood risk management objectives, both at the risk and consequence management stages, based on Council Regulation 2022/2371 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 November 2022 on serious cross-border threats to health¹⁹;
31. **Stresses** the need to provide the adequate resources for expertise, response capacity, and maintenance of existing systems to increase resilience. To maintain the capacity to respond, increased attention should be paid to cross-border preventive measures, training, and exercises;

¹⁷ International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)

¹⁸ Finnish-Swedish Transboundary River Commission

¹⁹ OJ L 314, 6.12.2022, p. 26

32. **Invites** Member States in line with the non-binding Union Disaster Resilience Goals to enhance disaster resilience when implementing the Union legislation and national flood risk management policies, and to align the different flood resilience objectives across policies, and to ensure intersectoral coordination;
33. **Invites** Member States to enhance flood safety in the European Union with the following measures:
- a) **Explore** further preventive measures, including the use of nature-based solutions to reduce the frequency and severity of flooding events, thereby mitigating the adverse consequences of floods and lessening the reliance on responses;
 - b) **Strengthen** the civil protection planning by providing adequate accessible information on flood risk and prevention measures to citizens, with a focus on young and vulnerable groups in the EU, and by raising public awareness and preparedness through education and training, in accordance with the Floods Directive;
 - c) **Promote**, in cooperation with the Commission, the enhancement of Union Civil Protection Mechanism's response capacities in the event of cross-border or large-scale disasters which can be used in case of major floods, taking into account the results of risk assessments, scenarios and capacity gaps;

- d) **Explore** the possibility of using innovative technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT) based solutions, to improve the forecasting and warning systems, analysis, and management of floods, flash floods, rainstorms, snowmelt, ice jams, storm surges and other natural hazards, so as to increase the time available for effective response. Sharing the best practices on the use of innovative technologies could further support the protection of EU citizens;
- e) **Consult with** civil protection, disaster management, and flood risk management organisations, as well as private organizations in the countries with international river basins when reviewing their existing national or regional risk assessments, in order to identify as accurately as possible the risks and their levels, to reduce the adverse consequences of floods and to effectively manage the consequences of any emergency related to flooding. In addition, explore further opportunities for public-private partnerships and further strengthen the lessons learnt, including the collection of data on losses of past disaster events;
- f) **Fully integrate** climate change as an inevitable factor, using the latest scientific research and climate projections, into the national risk policies, based on appropriate climate change scenarios and other relevant scenarios as recommended in the first EU Climate Risk Assessment and the Communication on Managing Climate Risks²⁰;
- g) **Ensure** that their civil protection agencies are adequately resourced and trained, as much as possible, to manage flood risks, including improving inter-agency coordination and cooperation with local authorities and communities;
- h) **Encourage** partner organizations from non-EU neighbouring countries to adopt a coordinated approach in the civil protection and flood risk management operations and to coordinate flood risk management in shared international river basins, and coastal areas;

²⁰ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Managing climate risks – protecting people and prosperity, 12 March 2024, COM(2024) 91 final

- i) **Pay particular attention** to flood evacuation procedures, embracing a whole-of-society approach and taking into account the specific needs of vulnerable groups, such as children, older persons or persons with disabilities, geographical conditions, and the impact of floods on vital societal functions, in particular supply of drinking water;
- j) **Pay particular attention** to protecting cultural heritage and environmental sustainability, notably nature based solutions, biodiversity specific solutions, and the adapted agricultural practises and take these into account as far as possible in the design, construction and maintenance of flood defence infrastructures, in accordance with the EU Water Framework Directive²¹ and the Regulation on Nature Restoration²²;
- k) **Strengthen** and better integrate the activities, including sharing of best-practices in relation to development of models and digital tools of the meteorological and hydrological services in the Member States, in order to further develop reliable forecasting and warning systems, that enhance the adaptation to the consequences of climate change, and increase the safety of citizens in the Union;
- l) **Further develop** geographic information system (GIS) capacities and risk analyses for dam failure occurrences, especially those with transboundary impacts, whilst taking into account possible national security concerns;

34. **Invites** the Commission to take the following measures:

²¹ OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1

²² Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration, OJ L, 2024/1991, 29.7.2024

- a) **Support** the further development of the resilience of authorities and systems involved in reducing adverse consequences of floods, also in the implementation of other policies, taking into account the Critical Entities Resilience Directive²³ (CER), and the relevant point of the Union Disaster Resilience Goals;
- b) **Calls on** the Commission to follow up on its Communication on managing climate risks to protect people and prosperity with a systemic policy response in all relevant policy fields ensuring more effective and proactive action on climate risk management, including by strengthening existing legislation where appropriate;²⁴
- c) **Develop** further with Member States the exchange of knowledge of best practices between flood management authorities and the civil protection authorities, within the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network and other existing structures;
- d) **Promote**, in cooperation with Member States, based on the thorough analysis of gaps, the allocation of adequate financial resources from existing EU funds to flood safety in the territory of the European Union as well as dual use of resources for flood safety, in particular to enhance resilience at all stages of the flood risk management cycle and ensure a robust civil protection system;
- e) **Recognise** the importance of meteorological and hydrological services before, during and after extreme occurrences and **promote**, together with Member States and other relevant partners, the coordination of their activities, their cross-border cooperation, their further development and the linking of meteorological and hydrological forecasting systems;

²³ Directive (EU) 2022/2557 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 on the resilience of critical entities, OJ L 333, 27.12.2022, p. 164–198

²⁴ Council conclusions on the 8th Environment Action Programme Med-term review – The way forward to a green, just and inclusive transition for a sustainable Europe, 11326/24, para 17

- f) **Further strengthen** the development and reliability of the European Flood Awareness System (EFAS) of the Copernicus Emergency Management Service;
 - g) **Facilitate** the exchange of good practices between MS in terms of flood prevention and protection using both traditional methods and nature-based solutions, namely through encouraging the exchange of civil protection, flood risk and other relevant experts to share knowledge, experiences, technologies, lessons learned and working methodologies within the Knowledge Network and exchange of experts;
 - h) **Strengthen** cooperation with the scientific community and sharing of good practices, to further develop early warning systems.
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