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TEXTS ADOPTED**P6_TA(2005)0334****Natural disasters (fires and floods)****European Parliament resolution on natural disasters (fires and floods) in Europe this summer***The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Articles 2, 6 and 174 of the EC Treaty,
 - having regard to its resolutions of 5 September 2002 on floods in Europe ⁽¹⁾, of 13 January 2005 on the outcome of the Buenos Aires Conference on climate change ⁽²⁾, of 14 April 2005 on the drought in Portugal ⁽³⁾ and of 12 May 2005 on the drought in Spain ⁽⁴⁾,
 - having regard to the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change of 11 December 1997 and the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by the EC on 31 May 2002,
 - having regard to the scientific report of the Institute for Sustainability and Research of the Commission's Joint Research Centre on Climate Change and the European Water Dimension ⁽⁵⁾,
 - having regard to the 'Forest Focus' regulation ⁽⁶⁾,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 3 November 1998 on European forestry strategy (COM(1998)0649),
 - having regard to the Commission proposal of 29 September 2004 on the future Life+ programme (COM(2004)0621),
 - having regard to the new European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 20 April 2005 on the EU's response capacity in the event of disasters and crises (COM(2005)0153),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 20 April 2005 on improving civil protection measures (COM(2005)0137),
 - having regard to Rule 103(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. having regard to the volatility of the European climate and the devastating fires and violent floods which have caused death and destruction throughout the continent of Europe in the summer of 2005, including in the EU Member States, the candidate countries and the EU's immediate neighbours; whereas Hurricane Katrina has caused unprecedented destruction in the US states of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama,
- B. having regard to the deaths of dozens of people in the countries affected — firefighters, military personnel, civilians and volunteers — who lost their lives combating these particularly fierce fires and tremendous floods,
- C. having regard to the extensive damage caused by these disasters in Europe, including the destruction of hundreds of thousands of hectares of forest and mixed vegetation, of vines, olive trees, orchards, houses and agricultural infrastructure in Portugal, Spain, France and Greece,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 272 E, 13.11.2003, p. 471.

⁽²⁾ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2005)0005.

⁽³⁾ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2005)0139.

⁽⁴⁾ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2005)0187.

⁽⁵⁾ http://ies.jrc.cec.eu.int/fileadmin/Documentation/Reports/Inland_and_Marine_Waters/Climate_Change_and_the_European_Water_Dimension_2005.pdf

⁽⁶⁾ Regulation (EC) No 2152/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 November 2003 concerning monitoring of forests and environmental interactions in the Community (Forest Focus) (OJ L 324, 11.12.2003, p. 1). Regulation as amended by Regulation (EC) No 788/2004 (OJ L 138, 30.4.2004, p. 17).

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- D. whereas some of the fires were linked to this summer's drought and high temperatures, but the abandonment of the rural world, inadequate upkeep of forests, planting of inappropriate tree varieties and a considerable percentage of criminal activity were also contributory factors,
- E. whereas the extreme and severe drought that occurred in southern Europe has contributed to diminishing the soil humidity, thus increasing the threat of forest fires and their aggressiveness; whereas the last few years have been marked by numerous cases of drought and a growing number of forest fires in the regions of southern Europe, accentuating desertification in many regions and affecting agriculture, stockbreeding and forestry resources,
- F. whereas climate change is one of the major challenges of the 21st century, having significant negative global environmental, economic and social consequences, including increases in the incidence and intensity of extreme weather events across the globe; whereas the objectives of the Kyoto Protocol are an essential condition for a global strategy on climate change, but further targets need to be set for the period after 2012,
- G. having regard to the economic and social damage caused by these fires and floods to the local economies, productive activity and tourism,
- H. whereas these fires are a shared and recurrent problem throughout southern Europe and the nature of the forests and climate of this part of Europe makes it one of the Union's most vulnerable areas,
- I. whereas for the second time in four years the countries of central, eastern and northern Europe have been hit by severe floods directly affecting thousands of families, their houses and other types of private property as well as public infrastructure and agriculture,
- J. whereas the Member States, especially the cohesion countries, as well as applicant and neighbouring countries, have difficulty in tackling such huge natural disasters unaided, and it is clear that they require solidarity and assistance,
- K. whereas the impact of the fires and the damage provoked by the flooding in many cases cross internal borders, and it is therefore essential to strengthen the joint resources for combating natural disasters and the Community civil protection mechanisms,
- L. whereas the rural development policy is insufficient for dealing with this problem; noting with surprise that under the new European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) there will no longer be financing for aid to farmers for creating firebreaks,
- M. whereas the Commission's communication on the European forestry strategy proposes no specific measures to combat fires, even though they are the main factor in the deterioration of Europe's forests,
- N. taking note of the Commission's communication on risk and crisis management in agriculture, as well as the communications on the EU's response capacity in the event of disasters and crises and on improving civil protection operations,
1. Expresses its solidarity with and its deepest sympathy for all the families of those who lost their lives and the inhabitants of the areas affected during this tragic summer; pays tribute to the devotion of the firefighters and civilians who risked their lives putting out the fires;
 2. Considers that the consequences of these disasters are of more than purely national scope and that they call for a genuine commitment at European level;
 3. Welcomes the solidarity shown by the EU and its Member States with the affected regions, in both the Member States and the candidate countries, and the valuable assistance offered to their authorities and emergency services;

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4. Expresses its concern at the increasing number of natural disasters, attributed to a large extent by the experts to climate change, given the aggravation of extreme events;
5. Reiterates its view that the Kyoto Protocol continues to be the central tool of the global strategy to halt climate change; calls on the Commission to take steps to ensure respect for the undertakings made at Kyoto and in its follow-up; interprets these extreme weather conditions as another sign of the need for ambitious world action to halt climate change;
6. Agrees that the Solidarity Fund rules should be amended as a matter of urgency so as to clearly include aid to populations hit by disasters such as drought or forest fires and to oblige national authorities to inform citizens about Community financial assistance and make this assistance visible in individual projects; furthermore, insists on the need to apply such aid immediately to areas and countries affected;
7. Recalls the Solidarity Fund in the EU budget and hopes that the Commission will quickly release the necessary funds once the relevant Member States have submitted their requests for assistance, including pre-accession aid, to help the candidate countries and third countries deal rapidly with the aftermath of the floods;
8. Calls on the Commission to continue its collaboration with the national authorities in order to support the affected population, minimise the environmental impact of fires and floods, provide public aid to restore the productive potential in the affected areas, seek to re-launch job creation and take the appropriate measures to compensate the social costs inherent in the loss of jobs and other income sources; also urges the Commission to expedite all the relevant Community administrative procedures, namely those relating to the need to re-programme structural funds and the Cohesion Fund and to make the overly-rigid processing of these funds more flexible;
9. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to work towards closer cooperation on civil protection measures in the event of natural disasters with a view of preventing and minimising their devastating impact by providing the services concerned with the necessary early warning, coordination and logistical tools, in particular by making available additional civil protection resources for major emergencies and creating a European Civil Protection Corps, taking special account of the vulnerabilities of border zones;
10. Calls on the Council not to disregard the need for long-term investments for policies to prevent such disasters and/or limit the damage caused by them and therefore to abandon its strategy of limiting the future financial perspective to 1 % of EU GNI;
11. Calls on the Commission to undertake a detailed analysis of the causes, consequences and repercussions of this summer's fires, especially for Europe's forests, to submit proposals for the development of a Community policy for bringing forest fires under control, and to draw up a common firefighting protocol; calls for the reforestation of affected areas to be based on respect for their bio-climatic and environmental features, using species and varieties more resistant to fire and drought and adapted to local conditions; emphasises the need for Community support for the replanting of forests;
12. Calls on the Commission to support measures, including measures to raise public awareness, in support of more sustainable use of water, soil and biological resources, in particular in southern Europe;
13. Regrets the Council's decision to eliminate aid to farmers for creating firebreaks, and calls for this funding to be reinstated; stresses the need to develop policies relating to the effective prevention of forest fires, reaffirming that the Commission must encourage monitoring and prevention measures, especially in the framework of the 'Forest Focus' Regulation and of the new European Union Forest Strategy, with a view to protecting Community forests from fires and to funding, in particular, appropriate forest fire prevention measures, such as fire separators, forest paths, access points, water points and forest management programmes;
14. Recommends the establishment of a European observatory on drought, desertification, floods and other effects of climate change in order to gather information and ensure a more effective response;

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15. Believes that the damage caused by recent events further emphasises that mitigation will be much less costly than the consequences of global warming; recognises also that many of the policies required to stop dangerous climate change will offer win-win situations in terms of reducing oil dependency, improving air quality and generating savings;
16. Calls for forest policy at Union level to be reinforced by giving it greater weight in the multifunctional role of European agriculture, with a twofold aim: maintenance and employment of the rural population and determined, substantial expansion of forested areas;
17. Calls on the Commission to include as an eligible expense within the appropriate financial instruments the possibility of cofinancing for technical equipment, including aircraft, to prevent and combat forest fires;
18. Calls for more stringent penalties for criminal acts that degrade the environment, particularly those connected with starting forest fires;
19. Calls, over and above town planning measures which prevent speculation on land burned by forest fires, for other types of measures to be adopted to make repopulation of the affected areas and proper upkeep of forests by owners compulsory;
20. Calls on the Commission to step up research resources for flood prevention and coordinate the research already carried out in individual Member States in this area, in order to arrive as soon as possible at a coherent energy and transport policy in the area of risk prevention;
21. Undertakes, for its part, to take all necessary steps to ensure that a medium and long-term, future-oriented, preventive strategy on forest fires is adopted at Community level;
22. Calls on the Conference of Presidents:
 - to authorise the drawing up of an own-initiative report on fires, droughts and floods by the Committee on Regional Development, the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development and the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety on the basis of a cooperation procedure;
 - to organise a joint hearing on fires, droughts, and floods;
 - to authorise an official visit to the areas of central and southern Europe affected by natural disasters this summer;
23. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments of the Member States affected by the fires and the local authorities in the affected areas.

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Basic guidelines for sustainable European tourism

European Parliament resolution on new prospects and new challenges for sustainable European tourism (2004/2229(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission Communication of 21 November 2003 on basic orientations for the sustainability of European tourism (COM(2003)0716),
- having regard to the Council Resolution of 21 May 2002 on the future of European tourism⁽¹⁾,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 135, 6.6.2002, p. 1.