Conclusions of the Chair, JRC Director General D. Ristori

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today's exchanges strongly confirmed that the international community needs to be better prepared to respond to the growing challenges in various aspects of disaster risk management, resilience and anticipation in partnership with the Carnegie Group countries, as well as international and regional organisations. Joint action and investment are more efficient, more effective, and more relevant than if we act individually.

Furthermore, the continuously rising costs of disasters at a time of global financial pressure call for an urgent joint and proactive action to reduce disaster risks across the globe. We need to act on three priorities: (i) more science is needed for developing expertise in disaster management, (ii) we need more solid data and modelling, (iii) the link between science & policy as well as science & society should be more developed.

(i) Regarding the first priority - more science is needed for developing expertise in disaster management:

Here, one aspect is the need to examine the effects of climate change in conjunction with a rapid urbanisation and the growth of global population. In 1950, 70% of the world population was living in rural areas. By 2050, this will be the contrary, as almost 70% of population will concentrate in urban areas. Today we are seven billion on earth and within the next two decades this number will probably reach 9 billion.

A second point is related to the complexity of large scale events especially those that have cascading or interacting effects on different sectors, in particular on critical infrastructures, such as transport, energy and ICT. We need to work
closely with key players in these sectors, such as transmission system operators. More science is needed to develop more expertise on a larger scale.

(ii) The second priority is related to the consensus about the need for more solid and robust data as well as inter-operable definitions (to measure economic and human impacts) and methods for identifying, assessing and monitoring disaster risks.

We should also develop a minimum international standard for multi-hazard risk and impact assessment methodologies, enabling comprehensive evaluation of risks and their interaction and impacts. Robust data are essential in this context for developing an effective modelling and impact assessment, not only at local and regional but also at global level.

We should also improve the sharing of warnings, particularly for events that extend beyond borders, have cascading and interacting effects and cannot be addressed by individual countries alone. For instance, we need to develop a harmonized communication protocol at international level, covering the entire communication channel from scientists to policy makers, to the general public, including local communities.

(iii) The third priority is related to the link between science and policy as well as science and society.

Science & policy: because the political leaders everywhere in the world are more and more confronted to the disaster management challenge and thus they become also increasingly exposed in case of mismanagement.

Science & society: because we need to integrate social science in disaster management, and in particular, develop deeper insight on behaviour and culture of different populations.
We need one shared global action mechanism, which enables to tackle specific risks, shared by various groups of countries, depending on the exposure to different hazards.

In this context, such cooperation could take the form of a Global Multi-Hazard Partnership. It should create a framework allowing to build on already existing networks at regional level to tackle vulnerabilities that countries have in common.

By its nature, natural disaster affects the whole society, and all mitigation measures should be perceived as a common interest. This is also valid at international level because natural disasters are a global challenge requiring a new world governance. Global governance should not be limited to the finance and economy.

This global governance needs a decisive contribution from science which has to be cross sectoral and cross border.

This Carnegie Group Senior Officials meeting is, in that context, an important step towards the identification of key areas of cooperation and good practices.

A second step should address how to implement the best available methodologies, and the best approaches. The JRC and the European Commission will be ready to contribute in close cooperation with the Carnegie Group countries and other key international partners such as United Nations and the World Bank.

On behalf of the Commission, may I thank you for active participation, the high quality of presentations and your personal commitment to make this meeting a real success.