

Brussels, 19 January 2010

The EU Civil Protection Mechanism intervention in Haiti

Following the devastating earthquake that struck Haiti on 12 January, the Community Civil Protection Mechanism is coordinating the European civil protection response. Alongside the humanitarian aid provided through the Commission's DG ECHO, civil protection is a key part of the EU response.

The EU Civil Protection Mechanism key functions in the relief effort are:

1. Coordination

The key role of the Mechanism is coordinating assistance interventions. It does so by, among other things, disseminating information to all Member States through the Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS), which links 31 participating countries; and deploying assessment and coordination teams on site that can carry out needs assessments and coordinate incoming European assistance.

- 22 European countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, UK) are currently assisting Haiti within the framework of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism;
- 12 search and rescue teams from EU Member States and Iceland, composed of around 400 staff plus rescue dogs, are working alongside teams from other countries. Search and rescue teams have extracted 90 persons alive from the rubble;
- The EU Civil Protection Mechanism has so far mobilised two field hospitals, six advanced medical posts, 29 medical teams with doctors and four water sanitation units;
- The Commission's Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) has deployed a 7-person assessment and coordination team to Haiti. The team is composed of six Member State experts and a MIC liaison officer and has been on site since 14 January;
- The EU Civil Protection operation is integrated into the overall UN response. The EU civil protection team is based at the UN operations centre;
- EU civil protection and humanitarian aid experts are also cooperating closely, including carrying out joint assessment missions.

2. EU capacity

While the Mechanism relies on voluntary contributions from Member States, it has developed a number of tools to strengthen Member States' disaster response. Primarily, it can co-fund transport of assistance up to 50% and help organise the transport of assistance. In addition, a number of pilot projects are currently ongoing to test an EU Rapid Response Capability.

- For the first time, the European Commission deployed two EU co-financed modules from the Rapid Response Capability, a water purification unit and an advanced medical post with surgery. The water purification unit is operational in Port-au-Prince, providing water for 20,000 people. The medical post is also operational;
- The MIC has approved more than € 1.5 million in co-financing of transport of assistance to Haiti, thus facilitating 5 cargo flights bringing aid into the disaster-stricken country. Requests for co-financing 7 additional cargo flights are being processed.

The Community Mechanism for Civil Protection

The Community Mechanism facilitates cooperation in disaster response. Some 31 states participate in the Community Mechanism (EU-27 plus Croatia, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway). They pool resources that can be made available to disaster-stricken countries all over the world through the Mechanism. When activated, the Mechanism ensures the coordination of assistance interventions inside and outside the European Union. Such activities are coordinated by the European Commission through the *Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC)*, located in DG Environment's Civil Protection Unit in Brussels.

Since its creation in 2001, the Mechanism has been activated for disasters worldwide, including Hurricane Katrina in the US in 2005, the 2008 earthquake in China and the forest fires in Southern Europe 2009.

Preparatory Action on an EU Rapid Response Capability

The European Parliament has allocated €15m over two years (2008 and 2009) for a preparatory action on an EU rapid response capability, designed to respond immediately to critical needs arising from major disasters. It consists of establishing dedicated civil protection modules for European civil protection interventions. By ensuring that key resources and essential equipment are on stand by during relevant periods, in line with scenarios for responding to major disasters, the preparatory action is intended to enhance Europe's collective preparedness for major disasters.

For more information:

Civil Protection: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/civil/index.htm>

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/civil/haiti_2010.htm

ECHO: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm

Vice President Ashton:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/ashton/haiti/index_en.htm

EbS clip on MIC coordination for Haiti:

<http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/player/streaming.cfm?type=ebs&sid=154008>