

Press Release

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Protecting societies from disasters: a major political priority

Strasbourg, 30.10.2006 – The Open Partial Agreement EUR-OPA Major Hazards of the Council of Europe is organising its 11th Ministerial Session to be held in Marrakech (Morocco) on 31 October to examine the orientations which will guide the future work of the Agreement on prevention and disaster management within the European and Mediterranean space. In its medium-term action plan, which will be adopted by the Ministers on this occasion, the Agreement recommends a preventive approach to natural and technological risks.

The Ministerial Session, which will take place at the hotel Kenzi Farah from 9 a.m. to 6.30 p.m., will be opened by Mohamed El Yazghi, Moroccan Minister of Territorial Development, Water and the Environment. The opening speeches will be given by Omar El Jazouli, Mayor of Marrakech, and Gabriella Battaini-Dragnoni, Director General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe.

The participants will examine the possible answers by the various actors concerned (international institutions, national, regional and local authorities, scientists, etc) to the major challenge raised by natural and technological risks. They will study the innovative actions which aim to promote an increased risk culture within the population as well as better management by all the competent authorities of disaster situations.

The debates will be based on the policies and experiences of the various member States and the actions developed by other international organisations partners of the Agreement. These debates will lead to the adoption of a Resolution on priority actions of the Agreement within the European and Mediterranean space as well as two specific Recommendations regarding disaster prevention: the importance of risk education at school level and the major role of local and regional authorities.

The programme of the conference and background material is available at <http://www.coe.int/europarisks>.

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