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ADVISORY GROUP ON ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCIES

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## **Environmental Emergencies Centre**

Note by the Secretariat

### **Introduction**

This paper introduces the idea of establishing an environmental emergencies centre as a measure to strengthen capacity and effectiveness of international frameworks for responding to environmental emergencies. First of all, brief information on the background of this initiative is presented, followed by an analysis of the perceived need for such a centre. Secondly, several options for the structure of an environmental emergencies centre are outlined. Lastly, given a risk of duplications, it is suggested that a survey be undertaken to examine needs and to map existing initiatives. A sketch of this survey is provided.

The Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies (AGEE) is invited to discuss the idea of establishing an environmental emergencies centre in general, and the proposal for the survey as laid out in this paper in particular. Furthermore, the AGEE is invited to suggest amendments if necessary, and to recommend the implementation of the survey, if deemed appropriate.

### **Background**

With the objective of strengthening the international system to respond to environmental emergencies, the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the AGEE launched the Rosersberg Initiative and – for its implementation – established the Rosersberg Initiative Working Group. At its meeting in Tunis from 3 to 5 December 2007, the Working Group agreed upon actions to be undertaken in each of the Rosersberg Initiative's thematic areas.<sup>1</sup> As part of Thematic Area 1 – Awareness raising, engagement, training and capacity-building – initial proposals were made for the establishment of a “training academy” or a network/centre for excellence for environmental emergencies-related training. In pursuing this proposal, a need for such a centre should be carefully analyzed in order to avoid duplication with existing initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup> Thematic Area 1 – Awareness raising, engagement, training and capacity-building  
Thematic Area 2 – Improving the international legal system in environmental emergencies  
Thematic Area 3 – Improving national structures and mechanisms

## **Why an environmental emergencies centre?**

Generally speaking, international assistance should be the “last resort” in the response to emergencies, following local and national relief efforts. Given the nature of environmental emergencies, the response needed may require a level of technical expertise that is beyond the capacity of individual states, but is available at the international level. Additionally, there may be a need for impartial assessments, sampling and analysis, for example in the case of pollution with transboundary effects. Consequently, international expertise may be requested on a quite frequent basis.

In order to make international assistance more effective, it is vital to bridge the remaining gap between the expertise available at the international level and the response capacity at the national level. This becomes even more essential in light of an expected increase in the amount and scale of environmental emergencies with larger direct impacts on humans, caused by rapidly growing industrialization and urbanization, and the anticipated rise in frequency and volatility of natural disasters due to the effects of climate change.

A centre on environmental emergencies, which would be a combination of information clearinghouse, resource for technical assistance and training centre, could fulfil the purpose of filling this gap, as it would contribute to awareness-raising and capacity-building, making expertise in the field of environmental emergency response more widely available. Different options for such a centre are outlined in the following section.

## **Options for a centre on environmental emergencies**

In his report “Strengthening International Governance Systems to Respond to Environmental Emergencies, A Baseline Review of Instruments, Institutions, and Practice”, Carl Bruch elaborated the idea of establishing centre(s) on environmental emergencies. Such centres could be established at the global level and/or consist of a series of regional centres, and could be (a) physical centre(s) and/or a virtual, on-line centre.

## Options for a centre on environmental emergencies (Carl Bruch)

*[Remark: The costs for an environmental emergencies centre would largely depend on the actual set-up. Annex 1 gives an overview of rough cost estimations.]*

The Environmental Emergencies Centre could be a **specific activity within an existing institution**, such as the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit (Joint Environment Unit), which already provides technical assistance and training courses, but would need to have a larger budget and staff to meet the demand and need for technical assistance and capacity building.

Alternatively, it could be **integrated into an external institution** (such as a university) but operate in partnership with the Joint Environment Unit and other relevant international organizations. Such a centre could expand upon existing capacity building programmes that the Joint Environment Unit and other institutions currently conduct, and also provide technical assistance to countries seeking to establish effective procedures and institutions for notification/alerts, offers/ requests, and provision/receipt of assistance.

Another possible approach is to **decentralize resource centres**, i.e. to use a network of regional and coordinating centres, as under the 1989 Basel Convention (see Annex 2). These regional coordinating centres build capacity, provide technical assistance, disseminate information, undertake pilot projects, and even facilitate technology transfer within the region. In most instances, the regional centres are hosted by existing in-region institutions with local staff; hence, it is not necessary to establish a wholly new institution. The host countries fund the centres, which also receive project-related funding and voluntary contributions.

Another option would be to engage existing **regional institutions as focal points** for training specialists, development of rosters, and other activities. Such institutions could partner with the Joint Environment Unit to strengthen capacity building, notably at regional levels.

An alternative could be to develop a centre as a modest **“virtual” centre** consisting of a senior professional and perhaps a junior professional officer. Such a virtual centre could develop an online clearinghouse of information relating to environmental emergencies, provide technical assistance, and serve as faculty in training courses organized at the national or regional level.

## Survey of needs and existing initiatives

As outlined above, the gap between international expertise and national capacity to respond to environmental emergencies persists. Existing initiatives and institutions for the dissemination of information, the provision of (technical) resources, and the facilitation of training and capacity building measures do not seem to have bridged this gap (a selection of such initiatives is listed in Annex 2). This may partly be due to the fact that environmental emergencies, while being humanitarian and environmental at the same time, fall into neither category and require a very specialized type of expertise. The establishment of an environmental emergencies centre could remedy this shortcoming. However, in order to avoid duplications, the actual need for such a centre should be established.

It is thus suggested that a survey be undertaken at the global and regional levels to assess the need for an environmental emergencies centre and to determine the scope and further details of this need. In this context, existing initiatives at global and regional levels should be mapped and analyzed regarding their geographic and thematic scope, objectives, target audience, methodology, set-up, staff and resources required. The results would inform any decision to establish an environmental emergencies centre, and would provide recommendations regarding its scope.

Such a survey would probably best be carried out by a consultant under the supervision of the Joint Environment Unit and combine several methods, including studying relevant websites, sending out questionnaires to a targeted audience, and conducting interviews with relevant stakeholders.

### **Points for discussion/questions**

Based on the above, AGEE participants are invited to:

1. Advise on gaps in the capacity and resulting requirements at country level;
2. Share their own experience with national/regional institutions;
3. Contribute to the debate on the need for a centre on environmental emergencies;
4. Discuss the purpose of the centre, i.e. which functions should it be able to fulfil;
5. Discuss the structure of the centre, i.e. is there a preference for regional centres or a global centre, or a combination of the two? Should the centre be (attached to) a university?
6. Discuss additional options to the ones outlined above;
7. Make suggestions for funding of the survey and the centres (if considered to be feasible).

## **Annex 1 – Cost estimations**

This annex provides rough cost estimates of the options for an environmental emergencies centre outlined in the main part of the present paper. The options are sorted in ascending order. All cost estimations are rough and actual costs would depend on the scope of the centre(s), on the country it would be established in, as well as potential for synergies with other institutions. Different options could (partially) be funded through the Trust Fund for Environmental Emergencies

<b>Option</b>	<b>Total estimated costs (p.a. in US\$)</b>
<b>Regional institutions as focal points</b>	<b>70,000 – 120,000</b>
<b>Virtual Centre</b>	<b>230,000 – 280,000</b>
<b>Environmental Emergencies Centre integrated into an external institution</b>	<b>250,000 – 300,000</b>
<b>Environmental Emergencies Centre as a specific activity within an existing institution (e.g. Joint Environment Unit)</b>	<b>250,000 – 300,000</b>
<b>Decentralized resource centres (costs per centre)</b>	<b>250,000 – 300,000</b>

## **Annex 2 – Overview of selected institutions and training initiatives and their relevancy to the discussion on the establishment of an environmental emergencies centre**

### **➤ *The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)***

Within the organization's objectives, in 2003 ASEAN established the Committee on Disaster Management. The Committee on Disaster Management assumes overall responsibility for coordinating and implementing regional activities, including the ASEAN Regional Programme on Disaster Management. The Regional Programme on Disaster Management outlines ASEAN's regional strategy on disaster management, as well as priority areas and activities for disaster reduction. The Regional Programme on Disaster Management is also used as a platform for cooperation and collaboration with ASEAN Dialogue Partners and relevant international organizations, including the Pacific Disaster Centre, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, and OCHA, among others.

Among the priorities of the Committee on Disaster Management is expertise development, as well as the establishment of a disaster information-sharing and communication network, and of partnerships with relevant organizations.

For more information, please see: <http://www.aseansec.org/64.htm>

### **➤ *Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at the Local Level (APELL) programme (UNEP)***

APELL was established by UNEP to identify and create awareness of risks in industrialized communities, to initiate measures for risk reduction and mitigation, and to develop coordinated preparedness among industry, local authorities and local populations. APELL produces technical reports and other materials to assist disaster prevention and response planning in vulnerable areas. The programme also participates in seminars and workshops around the world with communities interested in implementing the APELL process.

APELL is a modular, flexible methodological tool for preventing accidents and, failing this, to minimise their impacts. This is achieved by assisting decision-makers and technical personnel to increase community awareness and to prepare coordinated response plans involving industry, government, and the local community, in the event that unexpected events should endanger life, property or the environment.

For more information, please see: <http://www.unep.fr/scp/sp/>

### **➤ *Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (Basel Convention)***

The 1989 Basel Convention utilizes a network of 14 Basel regional and coordinating centres (BCRCs) around the world. These regional coordinating centres build capacity, provide technical assistance, disseminate information, undertake pilot projects, and even facilitate technology transfer within the region. In most instances, the regional centres are hosted by existing in-region institutions with local staff. For example, Basel Nigeria is hosted jointly by the Federal Ministry of Environment and the University of Ibadan, while the Pacific Regional Environment Program hosts the South Pacific regional centre in Samoa. The host countries fund the centres, which also receive project-related funding and voluntary contributions.

For more information, please see: <http://www.basel.int/centers/centers.html>

➤ ***Capacity for Disaster for Disaster Reduction Initiative (CADRI)***

CADRI was created in 2007 as a joint programme of the United Nations Development Programme's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (UNDP/BCPR), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR). CADRI succeeds the UN Disaster Management Training Programme, a global learning initiative that trained United Nations, government and civil society professionals between 1991 and 2006.

CADRI's design builds upon the success and lessons learned from the UN Disaster Management Training Programme, including the development of high quality resource materials on a wide range of disaster management and training topics and advances in technology for networking and learning purposes. CADRI's design also reflects the critical role that the UN system plays at the national level in supporting governments' efforts to advance disaster risk reduction. In the context of the UN's increasingly important role, CADRI provides capacity enhancement services to both the UN system at the country level as well as governments. These include learning and training services and capacity development services to support governments to establish the foundation for advancing risk reduction.

For more information, please see: <http://www.unisdr.org/cadri/>

➤ ***Centro de Coordinación para la Prevención de Desastres Naturales en América Central (CEPREDENAC)***

The Coordination Center for Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (CEPREDENAC) is a regional organization with the mandate to promote activities, projects and programmes that contribute to disaster risk reduction. In addition to the promotion and coordination of international cooperation of emergency response, CEPREDENAC facilitates the exchange of experiences between institutions and countries, as well as the provision of technical assistance to reduce effects of disasters in the region. To this avail, CEPREDENAC offers various training and capacity-building opportunities in disaster management and risk reduction, as well as in the reduction of disaster vulnerability.

For more information, please see: <http://www.sica.int/cepredenac/>

➤ ***Cleaner Production Centre (UNIDO & UNEP)***

The Cleaner Production (CP) programme of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) aims at building national Cleaner Production capacities, fostering dialogue between industry and government and enhancing investments for transfer and development of environmentally sound technologies. Through this programme, UNIDO is bridging the gap between competitive industrial production and environmental concerns. It has a widespread application at all decision-making levels in industry, with the chief focus on adoption of cleaner technologies and techniques within the industrial sector.

To implement the programme and to promote the application of Cleaner Production by enterprises in developing and transition countries, UNIDO in cooperation with UNEP started, in 1994, to set up National Cleaner Production Centers (NCPCs) and National Cleaner Production Programmes (NCPPs). Since then, 37 NCPCs and NCPPs have been established, with others in the planning stage. UNIDO manages the NCPCs and NCPPs network and works in tandem with other organizations, such as UNEP, to provide cutting edge experience and strategic direction.

For more information, please see: <http://www.unido.org/index.php?id=o4460>

➤ ***Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents***

The 1992 Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is designed to protect human beings and the environment against industrial accidents by preventing them as far as possible, by reducing their frequency and severity and by mitigating their effects. It promotes active international cooperation between the contracting Parties before, during and after an industrial accident.

The Industrial Accidents Convention foresees an Assistance Programme that provides technical assistance to some UNECE Member States that are not parties to the Convention. Through this Assistance Programme, UNECE provides capacity building activities including workshops, training sessions, and exchange programmes; technical advisory services for emergency preparedness and response, particularly in areas of need identified by fact-finding missions; and establishment of transboundary pilot projects and joint exercises.

For more information, please see: <http://www.unece.org/env/teia/welcome.htm>

➤ ***Environmental Emergencies Training (Joint Environment Unit)***

Together with Crisis Management Netherlands and the Swedish Rescue Services Agency (now: Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency), the Joint Environment Unit developed a training course on environmental emergency response. The primary target audience is environmental experts who can be deployed for multilateral emergency response missions through the mechanisms of their home countries. To ensure that participants of the training would be mission ready, the comprehensive curriculum of the training covers a wide range of issues such as the UN response system to natural disasters, environmental emergencies, personal mission preparedness, information management, stress management and cultural awareness.

For more information, please see: <http://ochaonline.un.org/ochaunep>

➤ ***Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) and UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network***

The Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) and the UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network have established a global network of regional- to national-level focal points and network structures for early warning of wildland fire, fire monitoring and impact assessment, aimed at enhancing existing global fire monitoring capabilities and facilitation of international cooperation in fire management. Additionally, through the regional networks, various training and capacity-building opportunities are offered.

For more information, please see: <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/>

➤ ***International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) and Urban Search and Rescue (USAR)***

INSARAG is a global network of more than 80 countries and disaster response organizations under the United Nations umbrella. INSARAG deals with urban search and rescue (USAR) related issues. INSARAG aims at establishing standards for international USAR teams and methodology for international coordination in earthquake response and has developed the INSARAG Guidelines. INSARAG was established in 1991, with the OCHA Field Coordination Support Section in Geneva functioning as its Secretariat.

INSARAG organizes regional USAR simulation-exercises and awareness training courses. These events provide a vehicle to introduce and practice disaster response coordination methodology as defined in the INSARAG Guidelines. The target audience of the exercises and courses are national disaster managers, UNDAC team members, Support Modules of the International Humanitarian Partnership, as well as domestic disaster response teams and international USAR teams.

Furthermore, INSARAG has developed the Virtual OSOCC, an online information exchange and coordination tool for disaster managers and international response organizations. The Virtual OSOCC is used by responders during major disasters to exchange information in order to facilitate their decision-making for international assistance.

For more information, please see: <http://ochaonline.un.org/?TabId=1436>

➤ ***Master of Disaster Management (University of Copenhagen and Lund University)***

The Master of Disaster Management programme is aimed at providing the appropriate skills for disaster management at national and international levels in areas of natural and man-made disasters, climate change, and terrorism. The programme provides professionals working with disaster management, including national and international aid workers as well as private sector and government officials, with a holistic interdisciplinary academic background in the three main processes of disaster management – disaster risk reduction, response and recovery.

For more information, please see: <http://www.lu.se/master-of-disaster-management-english>

➤ ***Monitoring and Information Centre of the European Commission (EC-MIC) and the European Virtual Academy***

The EC-MIC is the operational heart of the Community Mechanism for Civil Protection. The MIC facilitates and supports the mobilization and coordination of the civil protection assistance provided by 30 European countries in response to major emergencies. It plays three important roles: (1) Monitoring; (2) Communications and information hub; and (3) Co-ordination. Furthermore, in order to prepare the response to natural or man-made disasters, the Community Mechanism for Civil Protection foresees three types of measures – training courses, simulation exercises and exchange of experts.

The European Commission manages an extensive training programme for national technical, coordination and assessment experts, as well as for personnel involved in the civil protection modules. The courses are intended to prepare participants for international civil protection missions, at operational or coordination level, depending on the participants position/background. The concept of the course is shaped around a combination of theoretical input, case study-based work, seminars and a real-time field exercise. This includes inter alia a Technical Experts Course designed specifically for technical experts such as marine pollution and water management experts, environmental experts (e.g. landslides, waste management, dam stability) and geo-hazard experts.

The Commission is currently preparing further proposals to develop a European network of training centres specialized in disaster management. This will be linked to the European Virtual Academy, which can serve as a portal to various training opportunities regarding the European Community Mechanism on Civil Protection.

For more information, please see: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/civil/prote/mic.htm>, <http://www.evanelwork.net/>

➤ ***NATO/Partnership for Peace (PfP) Course on International Environmental Disaster Operations***

The annual NATO/PfP International Course on Environmental Disaster Operations is organized by the Swedish Rescue Services Agency (now: Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency). The course is intended for environmental disaster response coordinators and team leaders as well as professionals and experts in geology, toxicology, hydrology, agriculture, chemistry, meteorology, pollution and epidemiology. The purpose of the course is to contribute to the participants' ability to organize and implement international response in case of environmental disaster, i.e. to improve the participants' preparedness for international rescue or relief operations at any environmental disaster situation. The course focuses on the nature of environmental disasters and international response systems and mechanisms, including the actors involved. Catastrophe and damage reduction, planning and prevention, follow-up measures, and analysis are among the issues for presentation and discussion during the course sessions.

For more information, please see e.g.: [http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2003/05-may/0521/8-19\\_sept\\_2003.pdf](http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2003/05-may/0521/8-19_sept_2003.pdf)

➤ ***United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) system***

The UNDAC system, managed by the Field Coordination Support Section of the OCHA Emergency Services Branch, is designed to assist the United Nations in meeting international needs for early and reliable information during the first phase of a sudden-onset disaster and in the coordination of incoming international relief at national level and/or at the site of the emergency. Upon request of a disaster-stricken country, an UNDAC team can be deployed within hours to carry out rapid assessment of priority needs and to support national authorities and the UN Resident Coordinator to coordinate international relief on-site. UNDAC also aims at strengthening national and regional disaster response capacity.

The UNDAC system has stand-by teams of disaster management professionals, who are nominated and funded by countries or their nominating UN agencies. The UNDAC system is divided into three regions: (1) Europe/Africa; (2) Americas/Caribbean; and (3) Asia/Pacific. UNDAC members are trained through a two-week induction course as well as specialized exercises and training.

For more information, please see:

<http://ochaonline.un.org/Coordination/FieldCoordinationSupportSection/UNDACSystem/tabid/1414/language/en-US/Default.aspx>