



Resolution 2493 (2023)¹

Provisional version

Political strategies to prevent, prepare for, and face the consequences of natural disasters

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Our planet is suffering the negative effects of the climate crisis which, according to the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), is making certain “natural” disasters more frequent and their consequences more devastating. These disasters pose a permanent and predictable threat with serious repercussions on the well-being of humanity and the global economy. The worst affected are vulnerable groups such as women, who are, according to the United Nations, 14 times more likely to die than men as a result of such an event, as well as children, the elderly, and all others in vulnerable situations.
2. Türkiye has just experienced the worst natural disaster of the last 100 years in a Council of Europe member State. The Parliamentary Assembly expresses its solidarity with the Turkish and Syrian peoples, heavily hit by an earthquake which struck their countries on 6 February 2023. It sends its condolences to both countries and to the relatives of the likely 100 000 victims; according to official sources, there are for the time being more than 57 000 victims. It affirms its support for the millions of people affected, including the thousands injured as well as to the displaced Turks and Syrians. The terrible consequences of this exceptional event will be felt for decades to come. It is a stark reminder to us of the indomitable power of nature, in the face of which human beings have no choice but to try and prevent and prepare for such events, to deal with the consequences in an urgent manner, before preparing the reconstruction, by gathering all the population and not leaving the affected populations isolated and without assistance.
3. In circumstances of such magnitude and gravity, the Assembly reiterates the importance of providing financial and technical support to Türkiye and Syria. Assistance must not only address immediate, medium- and longer-term needs but also, and above all, be based on human rights. The Assembly welcomes the extraordinary outpouring of support from the member States and the European Union. It thanks the Council of Europe Development Bank for the speed with which it has moved to assist the Turkish authorities and for its support for earthquake-related projects in the country.
4. After the donors’ conference and in anticipation of the reconstruction process, which will have to address the needs and the state of mental health of the earthquake-affected populations in central Türkiye and Syria, the Assembly calls for a broad awareness among stakeholders of major hazards and the handling of their consequences. This disaster is an historical event. It must make us put into question our work on prevention, preparation, consideration, and reconstruction after an extreme event. We must give a holistic response to natural risks, so that no one is forgotten, while taking into account the risks associated with the Anthropocene era. The Assembly regrets the general lack of investment by member States in Council of Europe instruments centred on nature, landscape, and major hazards, and also the inexorable withdrawal of States Parties.

1. *Assembly debate* on 26 April 2023 (12th sitting) (see [Doc. 15738](#) and [addendum](#) report of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, rapporteur: Mr Simon Moutquin). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 26 April 2023 (12th sitting).

See also [Recommendation 2251 \(2023\)](#).



5. International players specialising in extreme events having emerged since 2000, the Assembly calls for better co-operation between the United Nations, the European Union, and the Council of Europe to ensure greater complementarity when it comes to dealing with natural disasters. It reminds Council of Europe member States of the need to practise prevention by preparing national strategies for extreme events, including those linked to the Anthropocene. These strategies should involve, in a democratic manner, not only national but also regional and local authorities in order to be as responsive as possible to the needs of the populations affected by disasters, while at the same time drawing on multilateral and bilateral international co-operation, in particular between neighbouring countries. Mitigation of natural risks requires a right to awareness and reinforced information, particularly for vulnerable persons who must also prepare. The Assembly stresses the role of decentralisation policies in percolating these standards down to the local level of governance.

6. Drawing on the IPCC recommendations, the Assembly stresses the need for member States to include in their regulation, as soon as possible, measures to adapt to the climate change and offset the impact of the climate crisis, including with regard to extreme events. There is no room for fatalism when it comes to natural disasters: dealing with them is the responsibility of public authorities. These authorities must anticipate the risks so that they do not become threats to the human, social and economic rights of people living in Europe and elsewhere. The Assembly hopes that the standards regarding prevention, anticipation, response, and monitoring in this area will be shared more widely. It therefore calls for more robust checks and prosecution measures where necessary to combat corruption in the (re)construction sector and in the preparation for earthquakes and extreme events in general.

7. The Assembly notes the ground-breaking role played by EUR-OPA, the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement, and underlines the usefulness of this Council of Europe body in preparing standards. Its approach based on human rights and democratic participation and its regional dimension, taking into account the needs of all groups of society, are still appropriate. The Assembly calls on member States to consider the need for European standards to respond not only to exceptional natural events, but also to events arising from the Anthropocene, including major technological hazards and the impact of war.

8. The Assembly underlines the role of the private sector in ensuring resilience to natural disasters. In view of this, it calls on member States to fully implement and operationalise in national legislation the concept of corporate due diligence obligations as formulated in the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and in Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on human rights and business.

9. The Assembly welcomes the 2016 Draft Articles on the protection of persons in the event of disasters prepared by the International Law Commission and approved by the UN General Assembly. It underlines the relevance of their content, including the duty of States to cooperate with each other and with international organisations and the duty to reduce the risk of disasters, conduct risk assessments, collect and disseminate relevant information, install and operate early warning systems, as well as the duty of affected States to ensure provision of disaster relief assistance and to seek external assistance. The Assembly supports the framing of these principles as legal duties of States as well as the call of the General Assembly for the conclusion of a binding international treaty on the topic.

10. The Assembly calls on Türkiye to:

10.1. continue the necessary efforts to preserve the pre-disaster social, economic and multicultural fabric during the reconstruction phase;

10.2. continue to facilitate the intervention of international humanitarian organisations operating on Syrian territory from Türkiye, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2672(2023);

10.3. not renew the state of emergency at the end of the three months declared, and opt for a democratic approach to crisis management;

10.4. provide a forum for consultation between international humanitarian organisations and national authorities in the event of disasters;

10.5. set up a forum for consultation between national, local and regional authorities in the 11 provinces to be rebuilt so as to strengthen local democracy and organise reconstruction more effectively, without any party-political bias;

10.6. reconsider the decision to withdraw from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210, the "Istanbul Convention").

11. The Assembly calls on the other member States of the Council of Europe to:
 - 11.1. show their support for Türkiye and Syria by providing urgent, medium- and long-term technical and financial assistance;
 - 11.2. encourage visits by parliamentarians and representatives of national, regional and local authorities to the 11 devastated provinces in Türkiye to show support for residents, learn from the Turkish experience, step up twinnings between municipalities and strengthen cultural ties and exchanges between young Europeans.
12. The Assembly calls on all member States to:
 - 12.1. co-ordinate their efforts at the United Nations with a view to opening the three border crossings between Türkiye and Syria for the passage of humanitarian aid, as five years ago;
 - 12.2. spread awareness of the need to prevent, anticipate, take into account and monitor extreme events in order to ensure that the most vulnerable groups do not find themselves isolated and abandoned at a time when major hazards are increasing because of the Anthropocene;
 - 12.3. take account of the role of international humanitarian organisations when preparing their national strategies for disaster risk reduction, so as to facilitate the deployment of such organisations in disaster regions;
 - 12.4. step up co-operation between peers, whether professionals or volunteers, at international level in order to make institutions more resilient;
 - 12.5. take into account the distribution of roles between levels of governance in the fight against major hazards in order to build the capacity of local authorities, in direct contact with the population;
 - 12.6. move away from a financial approach to disaster management, by allocating the necessary funds and combating corruption and bad governance which increase the vulnerability of those most at risk.
13. In the light of the shared values that bind all Council of Europe member States and the active commitment to Europe of the Turkish youth, the Assembly encourages the European Commission and the Turkish authorities to resume negotiations on suspending the visa requirement for Turkish nationals. In this context, it once more invites the Turkish authorities to review their overly broad interpretation of anti-terror legislation.
14. In the run-up to the 4th Council of Europe Summit and in view of the increased risk of extreme events in the context of the climate crisis, the Assembly calls on member States to put the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment at the top of the agenda. It asks them to start considering the added value provided by the nature-, landscape- and major hazard-centred solutions developed by the Council of Europe which use the human rights-based regional approach to protect vulnerable people and to reinforce the resilience of populations against all extreme events and their short-, middle-, and long-term consequences, including on migration. It calls on member States to use the benefit from the experience gained and to ensure the sustainability of these instruments before they disappear. It invites them to co-operate further on the creation of continental standards based on human rights and democratic participation, with a regional focus.