

Working Table III – Security Issues
Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative

DISCUSSION PAPER:

**EMERGENCY NETWORKS AND OTHER DISASTER RELATED
INITIATIVES IN THE SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE**

Existing Emergency Response Mechanisms

The three most common mechanisms and communication/information-sharing channels the country stricken by disaster would use to convey a request for assistance in a situation of disaster emergency are: 1) **diplomatic bilateral communication**, 2) **the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)** and 3) **the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA)** complemented and supported by the **Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC)**.

The **IFRC** communication/information sharing and disaster response system is based on the network of and previously established high level of cooperation among the Red Cross and/or Red Crescent National Societies. When the Red Cross or Red Crescent National Society in the stricken country request emergency support, the Federation Secretariat assumes the role of coordinator, launch international appeals to raise funds for the relief operations and mobilize personnel and relief goods. However, the overall international coordinating body is UN-OCHA and coordination of activities and information exchange between UN-OCHA and IFRC networks has been performed on regular bases at the HQ/Geneva level and at the national level in the country stricken with the disaster.

The **UN-OCHA** is part of the UN Secretariat, has the mandate to coordinate the provision of humanitarian assistance (particularly that of UN system) in complex emergencies and natural disaster and usually works to enable rapid effective response by all parties involved – including governments, non-governmental organizations and UN agencies. UN-OCHA carries out its coordination function primarily through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which is chaired by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC). Participants include all humanitarian partners, from UN agencies, funds and programs to the Red Cross Movement and NGOs. The IASC ensures inter-agency decision-making in response to complex emergencies. These responses include needs assessments, consolidated appeals, field coordination arrangements and the development of humanitarian policies.

The **EADRCC** has been created as the focal point for coordinating disaster relief efforts of the 46 Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) nations in case of natural or technological disasters within the EAPC geographical area and it complements and supports the UN role. To ensure this cooperation, a UN-OCHA Liaison Officer is permanently based in the EADRCC. In a situation of emergency, main EADRCC activities are, in full cooperation and coordination with UN-OCHA, to coordinate the response to disasters within the EAPC area upon request of the

stricken country and to act as an information-sharing tool for EAPC nations on disaster assistance.

From SEE region, all countries except Serbia and Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina (non-EAPC countries) are relying on and using mainly EADRCC to exchange information in a case of natural or man-made disaster.

Other Disaster Related Initiatives/Networks

The **Civil-Military Emergency Planning/Preparedness (CMEP)** Program's Mission is to develop and lead bilateral and multilateral Programs, which support US Department of Defense and US Army security cooperation objectives by enhancing civil-military cooperation in preparedness for major emergencies that can threaten large populations. The CMEP objectives, enhancing inter-ministerial and regional cooperation in preparedness and planning for civilian and military cooperation in response to consequences of any disaster, building civil capacity through pre-planned mutual support, reducing demand and increasing efficiency for military assistance to disaster relief operations, and strengthening the Civil-Emergency Planning (CEP) Processes and competencies of NATO, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) and regional groups of Allied and Partner nations, are to be achieved through following CMEP activities: multinational workshops for emergency preparedness **information management**, New Hampshire Program and special initiatives. The multinational workshops/table-top exercises, as computerized simulations of one or several disasters with an aim to facilitate and expedite information management while responding to requests for assistance by SEE neighbors, are the core CMEP activity in SEE region.

Furthermore, the CMEP utilize UN-OCHA and EADRCC guidelines and formats to enable and enhance coordination and interoperability on information management between civil national emergency management authorities and their military counterparts. As a result, the CMEP handbook has been developed by the mutual efforts of civil and military experts and contains both internationally agreed and unique regional information, standards and procedures needed by both civil and military authorities to plan and respond to natural or man-made disasters.

The **South Eastern Europe Simulation Network (SEESIM)**, supported by the US, is a tool that integrated several related South Eastern Europe Defense Ministerial (SEDM) initiatives through a series of simulation-based exercises. The purpose of SEESIM is to promote cooperation, coordination and interoperability among SEDM nations and the SEDM Initiatives (South Eastern Europe Brigade [SEEBRIG], Engineer Task Force [ETF], Current Communications, and SEE Civil-Military Emergency Planning, etc.) through the use of computer modeling and simulation (M&S). The SEESIM Exercises are organized every second year (next one is planned for 2006 in Romania and Macedonia) as distributed simulation Exercise within the framework of Partnership for Peace and the SEDM process. The Exercise include military and civilian agencies from the SEDM countries and international organizations. The purpose of the Exercise is to enhance the **application of procedures** of national and regional coordination, cooperation and mutual assistance among SEDM nations in the case of disaster, including the terrorist attacks.

The Existing Role of the SP DPPI

The overall objective of the SP DPPI is to foster regional cooperation and coordination in disaster preparedness and prevention for natural and man-made disasters in SEE, attempting to strengthen good neighborly relations and stability through the exchange of information, lessons learnt and best practices in the field of disaster management; enhance cooperation between DPPI partners in view of EU enlargement and the process of Euro - Atlantic integration for SEE countries; and support and encourage countries in the region to develop, adopt and/or enforce state-of-art disaster emergency legislation, environmental regulations and codes designed to prevent and mitigate disasters in line with guidelines and common practices accepted in the international community. In short, the SP DPPI is building human capacity of the civil protection agencies in the region by promoting mutual cooperation, providing different types of disaster and management related trainings and workshops, securing information sharing and experience exchange; and supporting disaster preparedness, prevention and management projects developed by the partnering countries.

The Future of the DPPI – to be discussed

During and after the Romania July 2005 flooding it became noticeable that the existing mandate and role of the DPPI should be reconsidered. As a result of joint actions undertaken by the SPSC and the SP DPPI Secretariat, including internal and external meetings and consultations, several opinions and recommendations emerged as potential directions in which the DPPI should be developed.

The most impressive suggestion came from the Romanian Prime Minister, conveyed by the Mr. Kössler in his email dated August 4, 2005, that the Romanian Prime Minister has proposed to create a fully functional response network for natural disasters in the region.

This suggestion contributes to Dr. Busek's understanding and expectations that the DPPI should, in a case of disaster emergency, play a support role in providing regional or direct assistance.

These suggestions, no matter how tempting and provocative, should be carefully considered and discussed, having in mind the existing emergency response mechanisms. Additionally, and as it has been proven during Romania flooding, EADRCC has been utilized by the SEE countries (excluding BiH and SAM) as information exchange emergency response mechanism supportive to UN-OCHA overall coordination role.

Additional support to the SP DPPI efforts came from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Montenegro, Mr. Draskovic, who agreed that there is "the necessity of improving regional cooperation and **establishing joint mechanisms for prevention and action** in cases of natural and other disasters" and expressed his "full support for the efforts of the Stability Pact and DPPI Task Force **to strengthen regional cooperation and activities** in the framework of Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative in South Eastern Europe".

Building on the above presented statements, and at the same time recognizing existing emergency response mechanisms and other disaster related initiatives/networks present and active in the SEE region, development of several functional, sub regional, disaster related networks might be logical step forward for the DPPI.

However, there are also opinions that “the DPPI should remain within its original mandate and role (as presented in the Gorizia Report), i.e. to provide various types of disaster management related trainings/courses, workshops, meetings and joint exercises which will ultimately lead to the development and implementation of a regional disaster prevention, preparedness and response strategy, focusing on the border-crossing procedures and on issues of unification of existing extremely different disaster management systems in the countries in the region including the legal framework and laws on disaster”.

Nevertheless, thorough thinking and greatest consideration should be exercised in deciding how and in what direction the DPPI should go, or to be more precise, what has to be done so the DPPI network can develop specific disaster preparedness measures and joint mechanisms to facilitate cooperation among the countries before and after the disaster incidents.

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