



Recommendation 1447 (2000)¹

Economic consequences of the recent earthquakes in Turkey and Greece

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The earthquake that struck Turkey on 17 August 1999 left over 17 000 people dead and over 100 000 families homeless. It destroyed or severely damaged some 60 000 buildings and vital infrastructure in an area of some 30 000 km², including eight urban agglomerations and the country's industrial and economic centre. Earthquakes in the north of Athens on 7 September caused the death of 150 people, injured over 2 000, left some 72 000 people homeless, while 95 000 houses were damaged, and destroyed or severely damaged thousands of businesses and vital infrastructure. Earthquakes again hit north-western Turkey on 12 November 1999, causing the death of some 800 persons, injuring close to 3 000 and severely damaging a large area. The Assembly mourns the dead, expresses its condolences to their families and loved ones, and pledges to do its utmost to ensure that assistance will continue to flow to the affected regions in order to provide the means for long-term alleviation of human suffering and for economic reconstruction.

2. Financial and technical assistance to Turkey and Greece is particularly urgent in the fields of housing, hospitals, the restoration of electricity, water and sewage systems, oil refinery capacity, ports, railways and roads and environmental clean up of water, marine and soil pollution caused by the recent earthquakes. It is furthermore vital that these countries' ambitious economic reform programmes – which have been vigorously pursued even after the catastrophe and which must be based on the principle of sustainable development – should be enabled to continue with the financial support of, in particular, the International Monetary Fund. This is necessary not least in order to cover the important losses incurred through the major disruptions of economic life.

3. The Assembly warmly welcomes the strong international support – moral and material – given to the two countries, and more particularly by Council of Europe member states, as well as the especially heartening mutual assistance rendered by Turkey and Greece in the wake of these tragic events. The Assembly trusts that the catastrophes, for all their tragedy, will further strengthen ties between the two countries and help them overcome their many future individual and joint challenges. It calls on the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to work in favour of continued support for Turkey and Greece until reconstruction is complete.

4. The Assembly furthermore welcomes the rapid reaction of international financial institutions – such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Council of Europe's Development Bank – and states its determination to work closely with them, in particular through its Committee on Economic Affairs and Development in the latter's capacity as their parliamentary forum. The Assembly stresses the need for assistance to be long term, due to the difficulty in making precise damage assessments immediately after earthquakes, especially as these continue to occur. The Assembly also underlines the need for strict accountability as to the use of assistance, in order to avoid any wrongful diversion of funds and resources.

1. Assembly debate on 28 January 2000 (8th Sitting) (see [Doc. 8594](#), report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, rapporteurs: Mrs Akgönenç and Mr Verivakis; and [Doc. 8601](#), opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities, rapporteur: Mr Briane). Text adopted by the Assembly on 28 January 2000 (8th Sitting)



5. The Assembly notes that much loss of life, injury both mental and physical, as well as physical and environmental damage could have been avoided had existing, stricter construction standards been more fully respected and enforced. It welcomes the intention of the two countries to ensure such full compliance in the future and asks the Committee of Ministers and the international organisations also to work in favour of such standards and quality control systems in their assistance activities. In particular, it emphasises the need to develop in areas of high seismic activity, such as Turkey and Greece, regional planning and urban development policies, as well as construction techniques which would minimise damage from possible earthquakes in the future.

6. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers considers the possibility of setting up a European fund to provide urgent financial assistance to countries affected by natural disasters, and to work in favour of having Council of Europe member states establish planning and co-ordination bodies at national and regional levels for this purpose, in close co-operation with such bodies as the Council of Europe's EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement. Consideration should also be given to the establishment of European rapid reaction capabilities for natural disasters under the auspices of the OSCE. Such capabilities could be in association with, or to supplement, any activity that may be organised by the United Nations or by any other international organisation.