Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1448 (2000)[1]

Social consequences of the recent earthquakes in Turkey

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly points out that the recent earthquakes in Turkey occurred in one of the country's most densely populated, heavily industrialised and prosperous regions. Loss of life was considerable, many people are now invalids or unemployed, and the local economy has been destroyed. Some not only lost family members, but everything they had: possessions, home, job, a reason for living. They now live in fear and helplessness.

2. Even today, despite the efforts and solidarity at national and international community level, many families among the most deprived are still living in great hardship in tents or prefabricated buildings, totally dependent on social welfare in a region in which the winters are particularly severe. In addition to housing, many schools, universities, hospitals and other facilities have been destroyed or damaged and rendered unusable.

3. The Assembly welcomes the international community's positive reaction and the national and international solidarity which has taken the form of financial assistance; but it notes that the financial resources needed for reconstruction greatly exceed Turkey's means, given the country's high debt level. Aid for reconstruction must therefore be given generously, and it is imperative that it continue and increase. But it must also be co-ordinated in order to optimise effectiveness, and reconstruction should be carried out with the agreement of and in consultation with the local authorities and other bodies directly involved.

4. The Assembly also notes that the consequences of the earthquakes for the population and their social implications pose great problems for the Turkish welfare services, and it calls for greater European co-operation on appropriate health care and welfare policies.

5. It welcomes the action of the Turkish governmental and municipal authorities after the earthquakes and especially the invaluable services rendered by Turkish non-governmental organisations, which must have the necessary funding and the Council of Europe's support if they are to continue to play their role. Apart from NGOs and the international community, ordinary citizens can be of enormous help to Turkey by visiting that country during the tourist season. The main tourist sites are at a considerable distance from the earthquake zone and the income from this tourism would be of immense help to the victims of the earthquakes.

6. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers invite the member states to:

6.1. ensure, whether bilaterally or in any other appropriate framework, more active partnership between municipalities in member states and Turkey, giving priority to rebuilding the schools destroyed or damaged by the earthquakes;

6.2. continue financial assistance to Turkey both in the form of gifts and loans, in particular through the Council of Europe's Development Bank, so that families can be rehoused and basic educational and health care services restored to optimal functioning as rapidly as possible as a matter of priority;

6.3. develop intergovernmental programmes of activities in the social field in co-operation with other international organisations such as Unicef and ILO in order more particularly to:

a. provide psychosocial support for the victims of the earthquakes, in particular children, and

1. Assembly debate on 27 January 2000 (8th Sitting) (see Doc. 8638, report of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee rapporteur: Mr Surján). Text adopted by the Assembly on 27 January2000 (8th Sitting).

b. rehabilitate workers incapacitated by earthquake injury;

6.4. help further develop civil society in Turkey and support the NGOs engaged in dealing with the consequences of the earthquakes;

6.5. offer Turkey the requisite expertise to develop effective decentralised government - preparations for which are currently being made - so as to give local and regional authorities real decision-making and administrative powers.

7. Lastly, since further earthquakes could strike not only in Turkey but in other parts of Europe, the Assembly urges the Committee of Ministers to learn the lessons of the recent earthquakes in the region, in particular:

7.1. by subjecting existing Council of Europe documents on disaster relief to critical scrutiny in order to produce, if need be, an updated European crisis management model for dealing with natural disasters or catastrophes, and

7.2. by asking member states to see to it that they have earthquake norms for the building sector and that these are fully enforced.