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Economic consequences of the recent earthquakes in Turkey and Greece

Reply to Recommendation[1]: Recommendation 1447 (2000)
Committee of Ministers

The Committee of Ministers has carefully examined Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1447 (2000) on economic consequences of the recent earthquakes in Turkey and Greece and Recommendation 1448 (2000) on social consequences of the recent earthquakes in Turkey.

Like the Assembly, the Committee of Ministers attaches great importance to the introduction and, where appropriate, tightening-up of effective preventative measures in regions with high seismic activity, and particularly the earthquake standards applicable to the construction industry in European countries. Accordingly, it decided in February 2000 to bring these recommendations to the attention of the governments of the member states so that they could take them into account.

The Committee of Ministers shares the Assembly's opinions, emphasised in both recommendations, on the importance of the international support shown, which must be continued, particularly the financial assistance to be given to the devastated regions. In this context, the Committee of Ministers notes that, in accordance with its statutory priorities, the Council of Europe Development Bank contacted the governments of the two countries concerned immediately after the earthquakes, stating that it stood ready to grant loans to help the victims of these natural disasters. As early as September 1999, the Development Bank's Administrative Council approved in principle loan requests of up to 300 million euros for Turkey and 80 million euros for Greece. In December 1999, in the context of the loan request approved in principle, the Administrative Council approved the first concrete project in favour of Turkey for an amount of 141.7 million euros. The project provides for the reconstruction of 18 900 urban housing units and 4 000 rural housing units and is co-financed by the World Bank. The Turkish authorities are continuing their preparatory work for the construction of 2 000 more units.

In July 2000, the amount of the loan approved was increased to 279 465 000 euros and the global construction effort of the project concerned 42 761 housing units.

The Committee of Ministers welcomes the fact that the construction of 15 502 housing units, financed by the Council of Europe Development Bank, has already been completed and their distribution to the earthquake victims has started.

As the Assembly suggests in its recommendations, the Committee of Ministers has consulted the Council of Europe's EUR-OPA Major Hazards Partial Agreement on measures to be taken at European level for the prevention and management of natural disasters. In this context, the 8th Ministerial Meeting of the EUR-OPA Agreement, held in Athens in February 2000, adopted a resolution instructing the Executive Secretariat of the agreement, on the basis of implementation of the permanent telecommunications system planned between

1. Joint reply to Recommendation 1447 (2000) and Recommendation 1448 (2000), adopted by the Committee of Ministers at the 745th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies on 14 March 2001.

the national authorities for risk management (EDRIM) with a view to assisting in decision-making and co-operation, to implement a plan for making this system available to the Greek and Turkish authorities responsible for risk management.

The adoption of this resolution was followed up by a seminar, held in Moscow in June/July 2000, on the contribution to the decision-making process in seismic risk management: models for earthquake damage assessment; and a meeting, held in Toulouse in November 2000 in co-operation with the European Commission and the European Space Agency, on assisting decision makers in emergency situations: management and co-operation.

Furthermore, at the meeting of the Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement held on 29 and 30 January 2001 in Paris, it was decided to organise in Turkey (August 2001) and in Greece (September 2001) two seminars to learn the lessons of the August and September 1999 earthquakes in these two countries.

In addition, as regards the expertise in decentralised government to be offered to Turkey, referred to in particular in Recommendation 1448 (2000), the Committee of Ministers wishes to draw the Assembly's attention to the fact that the Turkish authorities are fully involved in the activities of the Steering Committee on Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR) to promote effective administrative decentralisation. The Turkish experts benefit from this committee's work and contribute actively to it. It also wishes to point out that Turkey held the chairmanship of the CDLR in 1999 and 2000, and was the host country for the 12th meeting of European Ministers responsible for Local Government, held in Istanbul on 6 and 7 April 2000.