The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"1. Considering that the Union's territory and citizens are increasingly exposed to the impact of disasters, as are many countries and regions around the world especially in developing countries, with a corresponding increase in the loss of life, economic, social and environmental damages, and that an approach that links disaster response with disaster prevention, disaster risk reduction and preparedness, is the best way to manage these risks;

2. Pointing out that measures taken at the EU level to improve disaster response should not in any way undermine Member States' own responsibility to take action and build up the necessary capacity in areas of prevention, preparedness and response, and that Member States will retain full control of their national assets (see inter alia Article 196 TFUE);

3. Considering that EU disaster response is primarily delivered through humanitarian assistance and through civil protection assets; that this response may also make use of CSDP and/or military assets in particular for the delivery of relief assistance when the need arises, in line with established international guidelines, in particular the principles laid down in the Oslo guidelines¹; and that improved cooperation with other relevant international bodies should minimise duplication of effort;

4. Considering that appropriate coordination must be ensured at the EU level taking into account the roles of the Commission, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European External Action Service, under the institutional architecture and responsibilities defined by the Lisbon Treaty;

5. Underlining that European relief assistance outside the Union is needs-driven and bound by internationally agreed humanitarian principles (humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence) and guidelines, as enshrined in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid;

6. Reaffirming in particular the central coordinating role of the UN as set out in the European Consensus on humanitarian aid, the Council decision establishing a Community Civil Protection Mechanism and in accordance with the Council conclusions of 28 November 2008 on strengthening relations between the European Union and the United Nations as regards disaster response capacity.

The Council of the European Union

7. Welcomes the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council - "Towards a stronger European disaster response: the role of civil protection and humanitarian assistance" and its general objectives aiming at a more predictable, effective, efficient, coherent and visible European response to disasters;

8. Agrees that an enhanced, cost-effective European response must follow an all-hazard approach, should bring together all relevant players, in particular civil protection and humanitarian assistance actors, and should ensure consistency and synergies between the different instruments;

9. Underlines that an effective crisis emergency centre requires a 24/7 operational capacity and should provide a coordination platform supporting other European services dealing with major disasters; Welcomes the Commission’s decision to merge the ECHO crisis room and the MIC to create an Emergency Response Centre that must be able, in full compliance with paragraph 2, to improve planning and coordination;

10. Recognises that lessons learnt from recent disasters suggest that, even though the EU response has been effective and swift, there is room for improvement; notes that the Commission communication puts forward many interesting suggestions to this effect; and Considers that, subject to the discussions that the competent Council formations and Working Parties will have on the revised legal instruments that the Commission is expected to propose in 2011, an enhanced European disaster response might include:

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3 16753/08
4 15614/10 + ADD 1 + ADD 2
• improved planning of interventions where appropriate, through the use and improvement of reference scenarios constructed on the basis of comprehensive and high quality risk assessments;

• more predictable availability of Member States key assets, inter alia by setting up a pool of pre-identified assets, available within pre-agreed response times, to be deployed through a voluntary commitment from Member States to make these assets available on a voluntary basis for European disaster relief interventions both inside and outside the Union (with Member States retaining full authority over their assets, their deployment and at all times retaining full right of use over these assets);

• an approach which takes also into account regional needs, shared extreme risks and, bearing in mind the previous point, the common use of certain assets, based on the principles outlined in paragraph 2;

• improved, more cost effective and well-coordinated transport of in-kind assistance to disaster sites;

• improved joint, cross-sectoral and comparable needs assessment in order to ensure well-informed decision-making;

• better and strengthened contributions to the efforts of central international players, in particular with the UN, by optimising synergies and information-sharing, inter alia through the deployment and secondment of EU staff to the local UN coordination system;

• a comprehensive communications strategy, involving all EU institutions and Member States, that will improve the overall visibility of the European actions;

• improved EU assessment for interventions in third countries, with a view to supporting the central coordinating role of the UN;

11. Notes that the legislative proposals brought forward by the Commission will be dealt with by the competent Council formations and working parties;

12. Considers the Commission proposals as a building block of a broader and more coherent effort towards a strengthened European disaster response and therefore looks also forward to examining the forthcoming proposals of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Commission regarding the further developments, notably on the use of CSDP and/or military capabilities as part of the European disaster response and the proposal to implement Article 222 (solidarity clause), having regard to the Decision of the Heads of State and Government annexed to the European Council conclusions of June 2009, and Article 20 (2 c) of the Treaty (consular protection) and on coordination, coherence and consistency in the context of EU crisis response and management."