



**First Meeting of Member States on the establishment
of the Continental Civilian Capacity Mechanism
for Disaster Preparedness and Response**
7-9 December 2022
Algiers, Algeria

DRAFT REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

1. On its 1042nd Session t held on 29 October 2021, the African Union Peace and Security Council considered and adopted a proposal by the Government of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria (PSC/AHG/COMM.1042 (2021)) on the establishment of a "*Continental Civilian Capacity Mechanism for Disaster Preparedness and Response*". The above proposal was discussed and adopted by the 4th Ordinary Session of the African Union Specialised Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment (STC-ARDWE) held from 13-16 December 2021.. The African Union Executive Council endorsed the creation of a continental civilian capacity for disaster preparedness and response and directed the AU Commission to organise a meeting of national services of AU Member States in charge of civil protection and response to disasters, with the aim of agreeing on modalities, including financial, legal and structural implications to establish the civilian capacity'.
2. Following the above Executive Council decision, a meeting of Member States on the establishment of the Continental Civilian Capacity Mechanism for Disaster Preparedness and Response (3CMDPR) was held in a hybrid format in Algiers, Algeria, from the 7th to the 9th of December 2022. The meeting was held with an overall objective to discuss and agree on the practical modalities for the establishment of the African Continental Mechanism for Disaster Preparedness and Response and its action plan thereof. It was chaired by H.E. Amb. Salah Francis El Hamdi, Counsellor, Cabinet of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Algerian Community Abroad. The specific objectives of the meeting were to:
 - Deliberate on the scope and objectives as well as legal, structural and financial implications of the establishment of the Continental Civil Capacity of Disaster Preparedness and Response.
 - Develop an action plan for the establishment of the mechanism
 - Discuss and adopt the survey tool for the assessment of capacities and capabilities of AU MS in Disaster Preparedness and Response at national level.

II. ATTENDANCE

3. The following Member States participated in the meeting: Algeria, 2) Angola, 3) Benin, 4)Cape Verde, 5) Central Africa Republic, 6) Chad, 7) Congo, 8) Cote d'Ivoire 9) Democratic Republic of Congo, 10) Egypt, 11)Equatorial Guinea, 12) Ethiopia, 13) Eswatini, 14) Gabon, 15) Gambia, 16) Ghana, 17) Kenya, 18) Liberia, 19) Libya, 20) Madagascar, 21) Malawi, 22) Mauritania, 23) Morocco, 24) Mozambique 25) Namibia, 26) Niger, 27) Nigeria, 28) Rwanda, 29) Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, 30) Senegal, 31) South Africa, 32) Tanzania, 33) Togo, 34) Tunisia, 35) Zambia.
4. The meeting was also attended by delegates from African Risk Capacity, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), the Africa Science and Technology Advisory Group on Disaster Risk Reduction (AFSTAG DRR), the Africa Youth Advisory Board on DRR (AYAB DRR). The Association of African Journalists and Communicators working on DRR, climate change and development (DIRAJ)and the League of Arab States (LAS).

III. OPENING REMARKS

a. Mr. Gatkuoth Kai-African Union Commission

5. Mr. Gatkuoth Kai, the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Technical Coordinator at the African Union Commission (AUC) hailed the potential of the Mechanism towards protecting the Continent from stresses and shocks. With the great steps that have been started by the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the continent now has the opportunity to consolidate our collective efforts towards achieving reduced loss from disasters, he noted.

b. H.E. Brahim Merad, Minister of Interior, local collectivities, and Territory Planning

6. H.E. Brahim Merad observed that African countries have expertise in managing disasters and that trends show that there is an increasing need to harness synergies for disaster preparedness. He informed the meeting that Algeria has recorded success in disaster response such as in air assistance, and management of maritime, land, biological and chemical disasters. The country has helped in disasters in Mexico, India, the 2003 Sudan floods, the 2015 Nepal earthquake. Algeria was in 2001 listed as an influential country internationally in disaster preparedness and response.

IV. ELECTION OF THE BUREAU

7. In accordance with the AU rules of procedure and under the guidance of the representative from Office of Legal Counsel, the meeting elected the following Members of the Bureau who will provide guidance to the process until the mechanism is established:

Chair: The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria (Northern Africa)

1st Vice Chair: Eastern Africa (Kenya)

2nd Vice Chair: Congo (Central Africa)

3rd Vice Chair: Southern Africa

Rapporteur: The Republic of Ghana (Western Region)

V. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

8. The meeting adopted the following agenda without amendments:

Welcome and Opening Session

Adoption of the Agenda

1. Consideration of the Draft Guidelines for the Establishment of the Continental Mechanism on Civil Capacity for Disaster Preparedness and Response
2. Consideration of the Draft Plan of Action for the Establishment of the Continental Mechanism on Civil Capacity for Disaster Preparedness and Response
3. Consideration of the Canvas Tool for the Survey
4. Adoption of the Report and Outcome of the Meeting
5. AOB

VI. CONSIDERATION OF THE GUIDELINES

a. PRESENTATION

9. Mr. Aboubakar Diané, Senior Policy Officer for DRR at the AUC, presented the draft guidelines (Attached to this report as Annex 1). The background was given, highlighting the AU decisions that led to the meeting, namely the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) which called for establishment of the Civilian Capacity Mechanism for Disaster Preparedness and Response, the deliberations on the proposal by Algeria and adoption of the report by the Specialized Technical Committee for Agriculture, Rural Development Water and Environment (STC-ARDWE) which endorsed the creation of the mechanism, the executive council which adopted the STC ARDWE report and further endorsed the creation of the mechanism and directed AUC to organize a meeting of national agencies responsible for civil protection and disaster management, with the aim of agreeing on the modalities, including financial, legal and structural implications. Further to the background the presentation highlighted the objectives of the mechanism as well as the financial and legal implication

b. DISCUSSION

10. The Member States made the following comments were made by the participants

- The need for the establishment of the mechanism was emphasised by the various Member States, who shared the experiences they have had with disasters, noting that had they been more prepared, they would not have suffered the losses they did.
- The document does not seem to have the recovery component and proposed the consideration of including recovery into the conceptualisation.
- The importance of the prevention part of DRR was emphasised by some participants, who, noted that the document is not strong on that aspect.
- More aggressive efforts should be employed to ensure Government commitment to finance the mechanism. It was recommended that the concept note reconsider the “voluntary contributions” and make it more concrete to ensure that the governments commit.

- There is need to unpack deployment, what it entails, the stages and the legislative frameworks.
- The role of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) has to be spelt out in the statute.
- Poor capacity is a big challenge in Member States and hope that the mechanism will help build the combined capacity of African member states to handle disasters.
- Operational issues have to be addressed from the start and further recommended that the mechanism leverage on existing capacities like regional centres.
- The statute should consider all stages of DRR from planning/preparedness up to reconstruction.
- There is need to consider the complex issues. Specifically, there may be need to consider peacekeeping for instance as part of the reconstruction
- The component on resources needs to be further clarified, with clear guidelines on the contributions of Member States.
- Member States already have DRR focal points who should play a critical role in the development and operationalisation of the mechanism.
- The contribution of each state should be clearly defined, including how to deal with a country who does not contribute but is faced with disaster.
- There is a need to assess the initiatives at national level to show how the mechanism can build on that.
- Some Member States of AU are members of international civil protection-the International Civil Defence Organisation (ICDO), which may be consulted to ensure alignment.
- There is need for preparedness actions to be well articulated in the concept and the statute. Early warning system is still a challenge for Africa, and therefore there is need for a component focusing on that.
- On preparedness, why is the focus only on human and financial resources, and not infrastructure? A suggestion was made to include infrastructure components as well.
- On structure, it was felt that the structure proposed will not adequately serve the mechanism, as it will need to go beyond the host country.
- The need to include the financial components was emphasised and a recommended for further deliberations on this by experts in the area was made
- On the role of the private sector, it was noted that there must be a plan for a private sector engagement strategy
- The Mechanism should provide a quick response to all member states, therefore the sanction regime should not apply to disaster situation
- There are new emerging risks, which have had implications on technical, policy and legal setup. Preparedness should include capacity building to address the emerging risks.
- There is a need to consider the bilateral agreements that exist between the countries.
- The component of recovery must be further developed in the concept note and statute. It was further recommended that a business plan for the mechanism showing how it will generate resources etc.
- Strong advocacy and awareness are required to ensure buy-in and support
- The importance for cross border risk management was highlighted
- A participant emphasised the need to harmonize Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) approaches as a requirement to recover and build back better
- There was a call for a high-level meeting on DRR to accelerate the process that is being initiated.

c. RESPONSES BY THE COMMISSION

11. Mr. Gatkuoth Kai, the AUC Technical Coordinator for DRR agreed with the observation that there is still work required to ensure legal frameworks guide the deployment processes. He noted that for instance, national laws must be designed in such a way that the country can receive assistance through the mechanism.
12. On finance, Mr. Cosby Nkwazi, Finance Expert at the AUC, informed participants about the following 3 options available for financing the 3CMDPR
1. Voluntary Contributions as exemplified by African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD), African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).
 2. Setting up of fund, run through statutory contributions (Member States would make annual contributions; going through the due process. There would be a need for an agreement on how that can be managed. AUC would carry out an assessment on the strength of economies of the MS; all countries will have to contribute, and if not, would be sanctioned. Therefore, proper governance structures would be required.
 3. Setting up of another fund-as part of the AU budget.
13. Mr. Mohamed Salem Khalil Senior Legal Officer from the AUC Office of Legal Counsel gave some legal guidance to the meeting. First, the guidelines recommended the development of a statute for the mechanism. The statute should be comprehensive, outlining all the issues that the Member States will agree to be included in the mechanism. Mr. Khalil advised that statutes usually have the advantage of ease of operationalisation, the statute will be adopted by the Assembly of the Union. On structure, Mr. Khalil recalled that the guidelines suggested to have a general Assembly, Governing Board and secretariat. The General Assembly shall be composed of ministers responsible for DRR and civil protection. The ministerial session will elect a bureau and there should be a Governing Board which will include representatives of Member States Commissioner of the AUC responsible for DRR as well AfSTAG. the Secretariat will be headed by the Director General, following precedence from other AU institutions. Mr. Khalil cautioned that the issue of sanction regime will have to be explored thoroughly, considering that the 3CMDPR) will be a humanitarian rather than political mechanism as recommended by Member States. The issue will need deliberation and the stance should be included in the statute for the policy organs consideration.
14. On capacity building Mr. Aboubakar Diane agreed with participants' comments, noting that training is a very important element of DRR capacity building. He further observed that deployment must be done based on needs assessment. He re-emphasised the need to engage the private sector, saying that everyone has a role to play in the mechanism

VII. CONSIDERATION OF ACTION PLAN AND ASSESSMENT TOOL

a. PRESENTATION

15. Mr. Aboubakar presented the action plan and the data collection tool for the assessment of existing capacity in member states. There were no comments on the action plan, but a few comments were made in relation to the data collection tool, and they are presented in the section below.

b. DISCUSSION

16. The following reactions were made to the presentation of the data collection questionnaire:

- There will be need to develop the questionnaire further and make it more comprehensive.
- Participants encouraged the clarification of state of emergency advising that the tool should limit itself to emergencies related to disasters, to avoid confusion.
- It was noted that there is need for the assessment to establish existing collaborations with NGOs and civil society
- Addition of elements of customs facilitation as well as coordination capacities.
- Also indicated that there is need for risk mapping as well
- A recommendation was made for the tool to consider technology aspects, especially competences and capacities with regards to risk management.

c. RESPONSE BY THE COMMISSION

17. Mr. Kai acknowledged the comments from participants and informed them that the questionnaire was to be revised, incorporating their feedback

d. RECOMMENDATION

18. After exhaustion of its Agenda, the meeting adopted the following recommendations:

- i. Stocktaking of existing best practices on disaster management and civil protection to inform development of the 3CMDPR
- ii. Develop Statute of the 3CMDPR
- iii. Explore different financing options, including the statutory contributions and consider engaging the private sector
- iv. Develop a business plan for the mechanism
- v. **Inclusion of Recovery, Reconstruction and Building Back Better** as part of the mandate of the mechanism
- vi. Ensure the African Continental Mechanism for Disaster Preparedness and Response aligns with existing similar mechanisms.
- vii. Include additional details on the assessment tool to provide adequate guidance on the assessment
- viii. Revision of the data collection tool and circulating it to Member states within 7 days in all AU languages

VIII. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

19. There was no any other business raised in the meeting

IX. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

20. The meeting adopted its report.