

PARIS DECLARATION

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONFERENCE ON "NATURAL DISASTER PREVENTION, LAND-USE PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT"

(Paris, 17-19 June 1999)

The participants of the Paris Conference on "Natural Disaster Prevention, Land-Use Planning and Sustainable Development" held in Paris from 17 to 19 June 1999,

REFERRING TO

1. UN General Assembly Resolution 44/236 (22 December 1989) on the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) to curb growth in the number of human, material and economic losses caused by natural disasters.
2. UN General Assembly Resolution 46/162 (19 December 1991), which recommends an integral approach to natural disaster management.
3. The Report on the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio from 3 to 14 June 1992, which underscores the need for greater co-operation with the countries exposed to natural disasters and other crises liable to affect the environment.
4. The "Yokohama Strategy and the Plan of Action for a Safer World" and the guide for the prevention, preparation and reduction of vulnerability adopted by the World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in Yokohama in May 1994.
5. The "Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements" (Habitat II) drafted on 14 June 1996, which underscores the right for everyone to adequate housing and the universal goal to provide safer, healthier and sustainable human settlements.
6. The Declarations and Recommendations of the 1998 and 1999 international conferences organised for the close of the Decade:
 - Regional conferences: for the Central and East European countries (Yerevan, September 1998), IDNDR/ESCAP Regional Meeting for Asia (Bangkok, February 1999), Natural Disaster Prevention and Reduction in the Mediterranean (Valencia, May 1999), Regional IDNDR/UNEP Meeting for Africa (Nairobi, May 1999), Hemispheric Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (San José, June 1999).
 - Subject conferences: Intergovernmental Conference on Emergency Telecommunications (Tempere, June 1998), International Conference on Early Warning Systems (Potsdam, September 1998), First Intergovernmental Seminar of Experts on El Niño (Guayaquil, November 1998), International Conference on Natural Hazards in the Mountains (Grenoble, April 1999).

CONSIDERING THAT

7. The end of this millennium is experiencing upheavals in the form of huge technological changes, strong geopolitical developments, new economic constraints, unprecedented demographic pressure and urban concentration, and an increase in ecological threats. This is seen in the greater exposure of human settlements and populations to natural disasters, but also in new ways of tackling them and limiting their effects.
8. Growing economic globalisation has provoked difficulties in transition economies with social exclusion that is affecting even the advanced countries. Increasing market interdependency is making societies more fragile. Impoverishment is spreading, bringing with it social exposure to

natural disasters. Migration is increasing with a rise in complex situations and conflicts. Global disasters (natural, technological and social) are increasing.

9. Demographic pressure is causing faster environmental deterioration: deforestation, soil, water and air pollution, depletion of natural resources, climatic fluctuations and a rise in extreme phenomena, etc. It is also causing the growing occupation of precarious areas and areas exposed to natural hazards and the disregard of rational land-use planning. All this is cultivating new instabilities, the intensification of natural hazards and the growing vulnerability of people and goods. It is reflected by an increase in natural disasters.

10 Urbanization, which accelerated in the second half of the 20th century, is one of the major problems of coming decades. Half of the world's population is already concentrated in urban areas. There are 25 huge conurbations with over 10 million inhabitants; 18 are in developing countries and their size doubles every 15 years. In Africa, 500 million people will move into the urban areas over the next twenty years. The damage to an environment subjected to growing urban pressure is a cause for concern. Plains prone to flooding and unstable hillsides are often inhabited illicitly or in an uncontrolled manner. The major problem is the protection of hundreds of millions of people living in zones at risk and in fragile structures. The growing vulnerability of modern societies to natural disasters is, to a large extent, a consequence of urbanization.

11. Nevertheless, understanding of the problems and practices and means for taking action are growing fast. This decade has seen, in particular, a greater contribution by social sciences and the assessment of human aspects in issues of vulnerability, risk, disasters, prevention and appropriate development. The development of the Internet has revolutionized communication and exchange systems. Advances in computers, which have become more powerful, smaller and cheaper, provide access to data processing and management and the use of information systems and scientific models as decision-making aids. Planetary observation technologies to ensure environmental security and climatic, oceanic and continental monitoring systems are booming. Engineering Earth and Climate Sciences have developed significantly. Appropriate and sustainable land-use planning and crisis management in real time are now accessible.

12. Natural disasters are real brakes on economic and social development. There can be no sustainable development if they are not taken into account.

A total of 90% of the disaster victims worldwide are in developing countries. They form the current emergency from this point of view. The best solutions for the developing countries are not necessarily the same as for the wealthy countries. Solutions must be adapted to local practices and defined with all the players concerned (experts, political leaders and local and regional authorities).

RECOMMEND

That the following considerations are made fundamental goals for the coming decade:

13. Combination of prevention, sustainable development and land-use planning :

We recommend that prevention measures be combined with land-use planning and development measures for sustainable management of human settlements and environments, taking into account their growing vulnerability and the interdependence of territories. We recommend, in particular, that sustainable development instruments such as the local Agenda 21s, impact studies and environmental assessments of projects systematically incorporate natural risks.

14. Disaster reduction special fund :

We recommend setting up a special fund, alongside the global environment facility, according to the same principles, to support the preventive component of certain investments, particularly during reconstruction after disasters. This recommendation would meet a pressing

need particularly in developing countries, and should be explored in depth with international agencies, NGOs and the private sector, particularly insurance companies

15. International, national, regional, local and citizen responsibilities :

We recommend that the natural risk prevention policies be harmoniously integrated into a continuum of responsibility among governmental entities, economic interests, communities and citizens.

These policies should be regularly assessed, especially in regard to cooperation between the different institutions, the mobilization of stakeholders, central-level support to local leaders and grass-roots initiatives. Scientists, political leaders and local players should cooperate more closely to encourage initiatives and the local ownership of prevention projects.

We also recommend that these measures:

- Take into account relatively rare events, with their potentially serious consequences ;
- Disseminate acquired knowledge of the risks and their possible prevention to the populations ;
- Provide appropriate funds to facilitate preventive actions.

13. Risk reduction and the sustainable development of urban areas (towns, cities and large conurbations) :

Based on the "look, assess, act, monitor" concept, we recommend that complementary urban prevention actions should be undertaken, notably :

- Draw up an inventory of specific physical features, hazards and land use;
- Develop forward-looking growth scenarios by mobilizing urban players and the population;
- Reduce the vulnerability of what is already in place (habitat, infrastructure, essential and strategic services, and cultural heritage) as part of medium- and long-term land policies and urban development measures;
- Provide citizens with information and education, and familiarize decision-makers and stakeholders on natural risks and prevention, as well as appropriate conduct in times of crisis;
- Continue and extend the cooperation programmes between towns (such as the Earthquake and Megacities, RADIUS and GEMITIS initiatives) so as to overcome local obstacles and promote further exchanges of experience and co-operation between towns.

17. Rural environments, environments at risk and protected environments :

We recommend that natural hazard risk be taken into account in environmental and rural management, and to this end :

- Asserting that vulnerability reduction of urban areas needs to be integrated with the territorial management of natural and rural environments ;
- Defining appropriate land-use (production, protection and leisure) in the natural and rural environments, based on topography, soils, hazards, etc. ;
- Developing management adapted to the sustainability of the functions of these environments and attaining the means to fund the implementation of this approach;
 - Identifying, at all levels, the responsible financial institutions (local, regional, national and international);
- Guaranteeing the necessary upkeep of the environment by means of regulations and suitable taxation;

- Creating a network of practitioners providing the link between the relevant parties (politicians, administrators, researchers, educators and citizens).

18. International cooperation based on balanced exchange and solidarity networks :

We recommend strengthening existing and setting up new international natural disaster reduction networks fostering exchanges of experiences and joint initiatives; a new form of solidarity respecting cultural differences. These future networks should take into account regional initiatives already undertaken at international level

19. Continuity of emergency, development and community reconstruction action. The role of the NGOs and insurance :

We recommend that parallel to humanitarian action and emergency assistance, prevention programmes should be set up to work closely with sustainable development assistance programmes. To this end, NGO intervention should be more diverse, better prepared and also developed.

Reconstruction assistance from the international community or insurance in the wake of natural disasters should avoid absolving the authorities and populations of their responsibility in this matter.

We recommend that the relevant communities and donors be encouraged to embark on reconstruction from the standpoint of prevention. The partnership with economic interests, in particular insurance firms, should be developed.

20. History, feedback on experience and outlook :

We recommend that the memory of disasters should be maintained at all levels and taken into account during elaboration of management plans.

We also recommend the establishment of international cooperation to build easily accessible data bases to be as comprehensive as possible.

21. Science, technology and education working for prevention policies :

In order to solve the issue of natural hazards reduction there is a need to insure that all fields of knowledge are appropriately applied, the keystone to a " risk culture ".

We recommend to maintain this mobilization in all fields of education, science and technology for the next decades, and especially to increasingly involve social sciences while carrying out efforts to better understand risk-generating physical phenomena and their effects.

We recommend to take advantage of new information and communication technologies, so as to disseminate more user friendly information.

22. The framework for action after the Decade :

Continued action is required to further prevention initiatives and exchanges and to educate, inform and raise the awareness of all the prevention and development players.

We recommend maintaining the national focal points after the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. It is equally important on the international level to maintain a UN inter-agency mechanism to encourage international co-operation and the definition of global natural disaster prevention policies. This structure should be supported by external partners (scientists, NGOs, etc.);

The post-IDNDR organization should be dedicated not only to natural disasters, but also to technological disasters since both are closely interconnected.

ASK THAT

The International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction Secretariat bring this Paris Declaration to the attention of the international community, in particular at the coming IDNDR International Forum in Geneva from 5 to 9 July 1999.

Paris, 19 June 1999