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PRESIDENTIAL DIRECTIVE No. 33

National System for Disaster
Prevention and Assistance

October 8, 1990



REPUBLIC OF COLOMBIA

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*TO: Ministers of State, Directors of
Administrative Departments,
Directors of Decentralized
Entities of national order.*

*Governors, Intendants,
Commissioners and Mayors.*

*REF.: Responsibilities of public
sector entities and agencies
in the development and
operation of the National
System for Disaster Prevention
and Assistance.*

The National Government has the obligation and the commitment to strengthen the Colombian National System for Disaster Prevention and Assistance. According to the provisions of Law 46 of 1988 and Decree 919 of 1989, public sector entities and agencies shall devote their best efforts to attain the objectives the country has set in this field, taking into account the following guidelines:

1. Disaster prevention is a planning concept. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the different public agencies and entities to include this concept in the preparation of their plans, programs and projects.

2. Likewise, it is essential to emphasize the importance of including this concept in the design, execution and maintenance of important civil works and industrial projects.

3. The Extraordinary Decree No. 919 of 1989, by which the National System for Disaster Prevention and Assistance is organized, has been widely spread since its issuance. It is the Government's purpose to effectively apply this rule; hence, every entity or agency has the responsibility of analyzing it and establishing which obligations it has and its possibilities to develop concrete programs contributing to prevent or mitigate natural or technological disasters in Colombia.

4. Every citizen has the right to the protection of his integrity and his property before possible disasters. As a support, the law provides for the creation of Regional and Local Disaster Prevention Committees. Therefore, it is the obligation of Governors,

Intendants, Commissioners and Mayors to provide adequate organization and to strengthen the respective committee in each jurisdiction.

5. Likewise, according to the directive, each public body and entity linked to the System shall:

i. Officially designate the office and/or person who shall have the specific responsibility for coordinating disaster prevention and assistance activities of his competence.

ii. Offer its support to the National Office for Disaster Prevention and Assistance and to the Regional and Local Committees so that these may develop, as efficiently as possible, their prevention, assistance and rehabilitation plans, programs and projects.

iii. Verify that during budget preparation process, the legal requirement

providing for the inclusion of special appropriations for disaster prevention and assistance shall be complied with. The National Planning Department, Corpes (Regional Planning Councils), Planning Offices of Public Agencies shall include this item during their drafting process of annual investment budgets.

6. Man cannot avoid natural hazards; however, it is clear that many disasters caused by landslides, mudslides and floods are the consequence of destructive management of the environment. This is why in Colombia such disasters tend to increase and have more serious consequences. Many decades of hard work are required to settle this debt with nature. Therefore, it is essential for territorial development plans to give the highest priority and support to programs and actions allowing for the correction of environmental problems which threaten the population's safety and the permanence of natural resources. Only in this way we may expect that in a future,

Colombia may decrease the occurrence and magnitude of disasters in its territory.

7. Every entity conforming the National Health System shall dedicate its capacity and efforts, under the Ministry's guidelines, so that each regional office shall maintain an updated health emergency plan and each entity its hospital emergency plan.

8. School buildings, stadiums, coliseums, sport courts, bullfight rings, theaters, auditoriums, churches and public facilities in general, and places of mass affluence of people shall have their own contingency plans for disasters. Every national, regional or local public or private entity related with the abovementioned establishments shall render their highest support so that these plans be drafted and executed as soon as possible.

9. Ingeominas, Himat and the Colombian Oceanographic Commission shall continue promoting the execution, operation

and/or expansion of a national network for seismic, volcanic, tidal wave and hurricane surveillance, as well as hydrometeorological automation.

10. Every governmental entity shall carry out education and training campaigns for their officials so that they become aware of their responsibilities in their fields of action regarding disaster mitigation and assistance.

11. International aid to assist disaster situations shall be officially requested only when its need is clearly identified and national resources prove insufficient.

Any action in this field shall be the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Office for Disaster Prevention and Assistance, which shall work in an integrated way.

This same approach shall be applied in focusing Colombian assistance towards

other countries affected by disasters.

12. The National Government shall advise City Mayors, the Mayor of the Special District of Bogotá, the Mayors of the Tourist and Historical Districts of Cartagena and Santa Marta:

i. To create the Local Committee as soon as possible in places where they do not already exist and provide the necessary support for the best performance of its functions, trying to link private entities as well as trade associations and technical and community organizations.

ii. To be aware that wherever there may be a population under a natural or technological threat, the main priority for municipal authorities during the preparation and execution of their investment plans, programs and budgets, shall be to contribute to protect the life and properties of the inhabitants.

iii. To this end, it shall be necessary that according to the provisions of Decree 919/89 and the Urban Reform Law (Law 09/89), the Municipalities and the Districts shall carry out necessary works and studies to identify the risks to which human settlements are subject and determine the actions to be implemented to avoid, or at least decrease, their disastrous effects.

iv. Therefore, human resources as well as physical, technical and financial resources, and specially the land lots owned by the municipalities and districts, shall comply with the main purpose of contributing to the protection of the people located in high risk zones through housing relocation programs or adaptation of threatened areas in order to avoid or decrease risks.

v. Likewise, each mayor's office shall undertake the vital responsibility towards the present population and

future generations and shall not allow nor authorize new human settlements in high risk zones.

vi. The habit of transforming rivers and creeks into public waste disposal places seriously contributes to the pollution of waters which populations downstream will use. Additionally, such wastes constitute an important factor for accumulating waters, obstructing the free flow of water which may give origin to mudslides on populations. It is essential to eliminate such destructive practices and develop different waste disposal systems which are environmentally safer.

vii. With few exceptions, our Fire Departments and Civil Defense Boards function and operate almost thanks to public charity, and are only remembered whenever we face our own emergency situations. Both organizations constitute basic supports for the Disaster Preven-

tion and Assistance System in each municipality or district. This is why municipal administrations shall try to strengthen them technically, administratively and financially through investment programs and budgets.

13. The National Office for Disaster Prevention and Assistance of the General Secretariat of the Presidency:

i. Shall promote compliance with the provisions of Decree 919 of 1989 and this directive.

ii. In accordance with such regulation, shall coordinate every support action required from the national level so that regional and local committees and entities may comply with their assigned responsibilities.

iii. Particularly, it shall carry out necessary coordination actions so that the country shall count with a National

Plan for Disaster Prevention and Assistance and a National Hazard Inventory.

iv. Shall support and promote public information, institutional broadcasting, education and training programs in disaster prevention aimed both at officials from the institutional sector and the population in general.

14. The country cannot afford to repeat the sad experiences of the past, originating in planning, organization and preparation failures of our institutions and in the lack of information and consciousness on the problem by the population. As a consequence, the attainment of this Directive's basic purposes shall be a national commitment and a contribution to the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction approved by United Nation's General Assembly for the years 1990 to 2000.