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International decade for natural disaster reduction

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 3345 (XXIX) of 17 December 1974, in which it requested the Secretary-General to take appropriate measures to provide facilities for co-ordinated multidisciplinary research also at the regional level aimed at synthesizing, integrating and advancing existing knowledge on the relationships between population, resources, environment and development, in order to assist Member States, particularly the developing countries, and the organizations of the United Nations system in their efforts to cope with the complex and multidimensional problems related to this field in the context of social and economic development,

Noting with appreciation the important contribution made by the World Commission on Environment and Development, as reflected in its report, which calls for new national and international approaches in dealing with the various factors affecting the environment, including natural disasters,

Considering that natural disasters, such as earthquakes, windstorms (cyclones, hurricanes, tornadoes, typhoons), tsunamis, floods,

landslides,
volcanic eruptions, wildfires and other calamities of natural origin,
have
claimed about 3 million lives worldwide in the past two decades,
adversely
affected the lives of at least 800 million more people and resulted in
immediate damages exceeding \$23 billion,

Considering also that, among disasters of natural origin, drought
and
desertification are resulting in enormous damage, particularly in
Africa,
where the recent drought threatened the lives of more than 20 million
people
and uprooted millions of others,

Recognizing that the effects of such disasters may damage very
severely
the fragile economic infrastructure of developing countries,
especially the
least developed, land-locked and island developing countries, and thus
hamper
their development process,

Recalling the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the
Organization, particularly the section concerning natural disasters
and the
merits of proposals that have been made to stimulate international
study,
planning and preparations on this subject over the next decade under
the
auspices of the United Nations,

Also taking note with appreciation of the report of the
Secretary-General
concerning the existing mechanisms and arrangements within the United
Nations
system for disaster and emergency assistance and co-ordination,

Recognizing the responsibility of the United Nations system for
promoting
international co-operation in the study of natural disasters of
geophysical
origin and in the development of techniques to mitigate risks arising
therefrom, as well as for co-ordinating disaster relief, preparedness
and
prevention, including prediction and early warning,

Convinced that concerted international action for the reduction
of
natural disasters over the course of the 1990s would give genuine
impetus to a
series of concrete measures at the national, regional and
international
levels,

Recognizing that the primary responsibility for defining the

general
goals and directions of efforts undertaken in the framework of an
international decade for natural disaster reduction and for
implementing the
measures that would result from the activities of the decade lies with
the
Governments of the countries concerned,

Considering that the concept of a global programme for natural
disaster
reduction is predicated on collaborative efforts among culturally and
economically diverse nations, together with relevant organizations of
the
United Nations system and concerned national and international
non-governmental organizations, including scientific and technological
institutions,

1. Recognizes the importance of reducing the impact of natural
disasters for all people, and in particular for developing countries;

2. Recognizes further that scientific and technical
understanding of
the causes and impact of natural disasters and of ways to reduce both
human
and property losses has progressed to such an extent that a concerted
effort
to assemble, disseminate and apply this knowledge through national,
regional
and world-wide programmes could have very positive effects in this
regard,
particularly for developing countries;

3. Decides to designate the 1990s as a decade in which the
international community, under the auspices of the United Nations,
will pay
special attention to fostering international co-operation in the field
of
natural disaster reduction, and to take a decision at its forty-third
session
on the content and modalities of United Nations participation therein
after
having considered the report of the Secretary-General referred to in
paragraph 9 of the present resolution;

4. Decides that the objective of this decade is to reduce
through
concerted international actions, especially in developing countries,
loss of
life, property damage and social and economic disruption caused by
natural
disasters, such as earthquakes, windstorms (cyclones, hurricanes,
tornadoes,
typhoons), tsunamis, floods, landslides, volcanic eruptions, wildfires
and
other calamities of natural origin, such as grasshopper and locust
infestations, and that its goals are:

(a) To improve the capacity of each country to mitigate the effects of natural disasters expeditiously and effectively, paying special attention to assisting developing countries in the establishment, when needed, of early warning systems;

(b) To devise appropriate guidelines and strategies for applying existing knowledge, taking into account the cultural and economic diversity among nations;

(c) To foster scientific and engineering endeavours aimed at closing critical gaps in knowledge in order to reduce loss of life and property;

(d) To disseminate existing and new information related to measures for the assessment, prediction, prevention and mitigation of natural disasters;

(e) To develop measures for the assessment, prediction, prevention and mitigation of natural disasters through programmes of technical assistance and technology transfer, demonstration projects, and education and training, tailored to specific hazards and locations, and to evaluate the effectiveness of those programmes;

5. Requests the Secretary-General, in co-operation with the appropriate organizations of the United Nations system and relevant scientific, technical, academic and other non-governmental organizations, to develop an appropriate framework for attaining the objective and goals referred to in paragraphs 3 and 4 above and to submit a report thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session through the Economic and Social Council;

6. Recommends that, if necessary, extrabudgetary resources be provided for the preparation of the above-mentioned report and considers that, for this purpose, voluntary contributions from countries, international organizations and other organizations are highly desirable;

7. Calls upon all Governments to participate during the decade for concerted international action for the reduction of natural disasters and, as

appropriate, to establish national committees, in co-operation with the relevant scientific and technological communities, with a view to surveying available mechanisms and facilities for the reduction of natural hazards, assessing the particular requirements of their respective countries or regions in order to add to, improve or update existing mechanisms and facilities and develop a strategy to attain the desired goals;

8. Further calls upon Governments to keep the Secretary-General informed of their countries' plans and of assistance that can be provided so that the United Nations may become an international centre for the exchange of information, the storing of documents and the co-ordination of international efforts concerning the activities in support of the objective and goals referred to in paragraphs 3 and 4 above, thus enabling each Member State to benefit from the experience of other countries;

9. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its forty-third session on progress made in the preparations outlined above with particular emphasis on defining the catalytic and facilitating role envisaged for the United Nations system.