

NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION, RISK MANAGEMENT, AND ASSISTANCE
IN NATURAL AND OTHER DISASTER SITUATIONS

(Adopted at the fourth plenary session, held on June 5, 2007)

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

HAVING SEEN the Annual Report of the Permanent Council to the General Assembly, in particular the section on the work of the Committee on Hemispheric Security pertaining to natural disasters and risk management (AG/doc. /07);

DEEPLY CONCERNED:

By the devastation in several member states caused by diverse natural disasters, including floods and droughts caused by El Niño, a cyclical phenomenon associated with warm water currents in the Pacific Ocean, landslides, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, and hurricanes which have resulted in losses suffered by their populations, including the tragic loss of life, substantial damage to their economic and social infrastructure, and the resulting negative impact on their development objectives and on their poverty eradication efforts, exacerbated by the diversion of financial resources to disaster response and away from sustainable development; and

The conclusions and recommendations of the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), also referred to as AR4 and published in 2007, whose summary for policymakers was adopted at the 10th meeting of Working Group I, in Paris, in February 2007 and which is pending approval by the Plenary;

The findings in that same report on climate change and sustainable development suggesting that a way to increase adaptability is to introduce climate change impact considerations in development plans, including measures for adaptation of land-use planning and infrastructure design;

REAFFIRMING the importance of urgently reducing the vulnerability of member states to natural hazards through the development of domestic natural disaster reduction strategies, mutual assistance, technical cooperation, land-use planning, and improvement of building codes;

RECOGNIZING the need to include a gender perspective in the Organization's activities related to natural disaster reduction and risk management;

CONSIDERING that effective natural disaster reduction and mitigation is dependent on a high degree of preparedness, effective mobilization, and coordination of the governments of the countries affected at all levels, as well as of the private sector and nongovernmental, community, and civil society organizations;

RECOGNIZING:

The important role of the Committee on Hemispheric Security (CSH) in coordinating cooperation among the organs and mechanisms of the Organization related to the various aspects of security and defense in the Hemisphere, including natural and man-made disasters, in the framework of the Declaration on Security in the Americas;

The Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR), in accordance with its Statutes, and the Inter-American Emergency Aid Fund (FONDEM), as one of the principal regional instruments for assisting member states in preparing for, responding to, and reducing vulnerability to natural and other disasters, and as the advisory body to FONDEM and to the states parties to the Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance;

The commitments made by member states to meet the natural disaster risk reduction goals of the Hyogo Framework for Action, adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (Kobe, Japan, January 18 - 22, 2005), including the important role of regional organizations in helping to achieve those goals;

The efforts of subregional intergovernmental organizations, such as the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA), the Coordination Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (CEPRENAC), and the Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Assistance (CAPRADE), in support of implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action; and

The need to continue strengthening the Organization's planning and management activities so as to respond more effectively to the frequent natural disasters in the Hemisphere;

RECALLING:

Its prior resolutions on natural disaster reduction and risk management [AG/RES. 2184 (XXXVI-O/06) and AG/RES. 2114 (XXXV-O/05)], on natural disaster reduction [AG/RES. 2024 (XXXIV-O/04), AG/RES. 1955 (XXXIII-O/03), and AG/RES. 1885 (XXXII-O/02)], and on OAS natural disaster reduction mechanisms [AG/RES. 1803 (XXXI-O/01) and AG/RES. 1755 (XXX-O/00)]; and

The commitment undertaken by the member states, set forth in the Plan of Action of the Fourth Summit of the Americas, held in Mar del Plata, Argentina, in November 2005, to substantially improve the capacity at national, regional, and hemispheric levels for risk mitigation; to implement early warning systems; to enhance disaster recovery, reconstruction, and resilience capabilities in collaboration with relevant regional institutions; and to explore with relevant international and regional institutions the coordinated development of effective public-private catastrophic risk insurance systems;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT:

That the First Inter-American Meeting of Ministers and High Authorities of Sustainable Development, held in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, on December 4 and 5, 2006, expressed in the Declaration of Santa Cruz + 10 that the impacts of natural disasters are devastating and negatively affect the quality of life of affected communities and the development of all countries of the Hemisphere and that risk prevention and mitigation measures can increase the resilience and reduce the vulnerability of communities;

That at that same meeting, the General Secretariat, through the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development and its Department of Sustainable Development, established the Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation (INDM);

That the 34 member states have been invited to designate their national operational focal points to coordinate and serve as national liaisons with the competent governmental, nongovernmental, and private organizations, within their national territories, for all INDM-related matters;

That in most countries the national operational focal points for the INDM are the government agencies responsible for natural disaster preparedness, prevention, and mitigation; and

That the General Secretariat, through the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development and its Department of Sustainable Development, cooperated with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in organizing the Regional Forum of the Americas on Laws, Standards, and Principles Relating to International Disaster Response (IDRL), held in Panama in April 2007; and

NOTING:

The ongoing coordination initiatives of the General Secretariat, through the Office of the Assistant Secretary General and the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development and its Department of Sustainable Development, with international financial institutions, and the important work of the organs, agencies, and entities of the inter-American system in matters related to natural disasters, in their areas of competence,

RESOLVES:

1. To reiterate the mandates set forth in resolution AG/RES. 2184 (XXXVI-O/06) and to continue to accord high priority to the topic of natural disaster reduction, risk management, and assistance in natural and other disaster situations.

2. To request the member states to continue attaching importance to climate variability, including the El Niño and La Niña phenomena, and the adverse affects of climate change, which represent additional risks for all the countries in the Hemisphere, especially for developing countries.

3. To instruct the General Secretariat, through the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development and its Department of Sustainable Development:

- a. To cooperate with member states and to coordinate its efforts with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA), the Coordination Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (CEPREDENAC), the Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Assistance (CAPRADE), relevant United Nations agencies, and other national centers in the member states , in order to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action; and
- b. To work closely with the appropriate national, regional, and international agencies on increasing the resilience of local communities and the most vulnerable sectors, with emphasis on developing and implementing risk self-assessment tools and systems; reducing the vulnerability of physical infrastructure, principally in the housing and education sectors; and increasing the ability to adapt to climate variations, considering climate change scenarios, and including zoning, vulnerability maps, and planning for land use and tenancy; and
- c. To work closely with the private sector, with international, regional, subregional, and national natural disaster preparedness and response agencies, and with nongovernmental emergency response organizations in eliminating obstacles to humanitarian assistance and

to risk transfer, with particular emphasis on strengthening the necessary legal frameworks.

- d. To compile and disseminate information on diverse regional and international experiences regarding insurance-related aspects of disaster prevention and mitigation, especially agricultural insurance for family-run small-scale farms or tenant farmers' plots, in order to benefit the most vulnerable sectors.

4. To recognize the Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation (INDM) as the permanent hemispheric mechanism for strengthening practical cooperation among intergovernmental agencies in the area of disaster reduction, especially by sharing technical information and best practices.

5. To request the IACNDR, with support from the INDM, to update the Inter-American Strategic Plan (IASP) for Policies on Risk Reduction, Risk Management, and Disaster Response; and to urge the member states to establish near-term implementation timeframes for its recommendations, in accordance with the domestic laws in effect in their countries.

6. To request the Permanent Council, with support from the INDM, to convene, for the first half of 2008, a meeting of high-level national authorities on natural disaster reduction and risk management, with the participation of the private sector, of subregional, national, and international agencies and organizations, and of nongovernmental, community, and civil society organizations.

7. To urge each state party to the Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance to designate a national coordinating authority pursuant to the terms of the Convention, taking into consideration the functions of the national operational focal points of the INDM, and to notify the General Secretariat of that designation.

8. Once again to invite those member states that have not already done so to give consideration to signing and/or ratifying the Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance, as the case may be, and to adopt the measures necessary for its effective implementation.

9. To request the General Secretariat, through its Department of Sustainable Development, to work on strengthening the technical capacity of member states in the areas addressed in the Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance.

10. To request the IACNDR and the General Secretariat to submit a joint annual report to the Permanent Council on the fulfillment of the mandates of the General Assembly and the Statutes of the IACNDR.

11. To instruct the Permanent Council and the General Secretariat to carry out the activities mentioned in this resolution within the resources allocated in the program-budget of the Organization and other resources.

12. To request the Permanent Council to report on the implementation of this resolution to the OAS General Assembly at its thirty-eighth regular session.

13. To request the Secretary General to forward a copy of this resolution to the United Nations Secretary-General and to the competent subregional agencies.