



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION
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**THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN THE FACE OF THE
CHALLENGES POSED BY CALAMITIES ARISING FROM ARMED
CONFLICTS AND BY NATURAL OR MAN-MADE DISASTERS: THE
NEED FOR A COHERENT AND EFFECTIVE RESPONSE THROUGH
POLITICAL AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE MEANS AND
MECHANISMS ADAPTED TO THE SITUATION**

***Resolution adopted by consensus by the 93rd Inter-Parliamentary
Conference
(Madrid, 1 April 1995)***

The 93rd Inter-Parliamentary Conference,

Deeply concerned that natural disasters and increasingly complex emergencies are causing enormous loss of human life, refugee flows and massive damage to infrastructures and institutions,

Worried by the complexity and interaction of the political, military, economic, social and cultural factors which combine to aggravate conflicts, whether internal or international,

Conscious that disaster-stricken countries have greater difficulty in achieving sustainable development,

Considering that not only natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, cyclones or volcanic eruptions but also catastrophes caused wholly or in part by human activity, such as climate change, soil erosion, industrial or nuclear accidents, dumping of toxic and hazardous wastes, environmental disasters or emergency situations arising from armed conflicts, require an effective response from the international community,

Noting that there are at present some 100 million anti-personnel mines which not only threaten human life but also appreciably hinder economic recovery in the countries concerned by maiming adults and above all children,

Alarmed by the growing number of refugees, of whom an estimated 23 million are assisted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and an estimated 25 million are assisted in their own country (displaced persons), and **deploring** that the UNHCR's budget has been increased by only 25% whereas the number of refugees has risen by 50%,

Concerned that the most vulnerable groups affected by such calamities - women, children and the elderly - have grown dramatically,

Recalling the resolution adopted by the 90th Inter-Parliamentary Conference in Canberra (Australia) on 18 September 1993 on respect for international

humanitarian law and support for humanitarian action in armed conflicts,

Bearing in mind the work of the United Nations World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction (Yokohama, Japan, 23-27 May 1994) and the adoption of the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation, as well as United Nations General Assembly resolution 44/236 on the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction,

Taking note that humanitarian needs require co-ordinated mobilization and a strategic response by the international community in its entirety, and **noting** the important work accomplished by the competent bodies of the United Nations (especially its Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), the UNHCR and UNICEF), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and other international and non-governmental organizations in promoting, co-ordinating and implementing international programmes providing humanitarian aid in disasters,

Affirming that it is first and foremost for each State to cope with disasters occurring on its territory and that international humanitarian aid must in principle be provided with the agreement and at the request of the country concerned, and in accordance with its domestic legislation,

Recognizing the increasing need for humanitarian assistance and adequate human and financial resources to ensure a prompt, timely and effective response by the United Nations system to all kinds of disasters and other emergencies,

1. **Calls on** all governments to identify those regions of their countries which are particularly prone to natural disasters, to assess the potential dangers and to devise appropriate preventive measures in terms of planning, construction or social policy;
2. **Supports** computerized international exchange of information which can be of use in preventing disasters;
3. **Urges** the international community to pursue preventive diplomacy and to stress its importance in forestalling crises at an early stage, and **emphasizes** the role played by the United Nations and regional organizations in providing the necessary means;
4. **Calls on** parliaments and governments to promote co-operation and co-ordination within the various humanitarian organizations and, particularly in the early phase of an emergency, to provide sufficient financial and human resources for immediate co-ordination arrangements in order to enhance the rapid response capability of the affected country and the international community as a whole;
5. **Also calls on** the developing countries to provide in their budgets, to the extent possible, for the necessary funds for measures to prevent disasters, and **urges** the developed countries to help promote such preventive measures through technical and financial inputs;
6. **Stresses** the need for international action to support economic and social development and to eliminate the root causes of conflicts and tensions, in order to strengthen international peace and security, and **calls** for worldwide of the United Nations Secretary-General's Agenda for Peace as a means of strengthening his Agenda for Development;
7. **Deems** it essential that emergency humanitarian relief be followed by a policy of

reconstruction and development of disaster-stricken countries;

8. **Recognizes** the valuable contribution of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to disaster mitigation and poverty alleviation, and **urges** those States that have not yet done so to announce their pledges to the Fund's fourth replenishment so that the agreed level can be achieved expeditiously;

9. **Calls on** the international community to take into consideration the fact that humanitarian activities, politics and military action must retain their own dynamics and separate objectives and tasks, in order to preserve the independence, neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian action;

10. **Supports** the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which must continue to be able to act as a neutral intermediary between parties;

11. **Calls on** all States to support any efforts to punish crimes of war and crimes against humanity, particularly the establishment of an international criminal court;

12. **Urges** that existing international arbitration bodies and tribunals be utilized to the full to ensure that in the process of resolving conflicts and providing relief, criminals are brought to justice;

13. **Also urges** all States which have not yet done so to adhere to the 1977 Protocols additional to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, and **stresses** their obligation to respect and enforce international humanitarian law, in particular by strengthening mechanisms for its implementation;

14 **Requests** governments and parliaments to legislate through international conventions on the maritime transport of nuclear materials and wastes and to improve existing provisions on this subject, so as to prevent accidents to human beings and the environment and to determine liability in the event of disasters;

15. **Invites** all States which have not yet done so to ratify the 1980 United Nations Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons;

16. **Calls on** States to lay down a ban on anti-personnel mines and blinding laser weapons during the review of the said Convention, and, pending their total prohibition:

(a) to stipulate that all anti-personnel mines must be equipped with effective self-destruction devices;

(b) to ban all mines which cannot be easily localized and to recommend specifications to this end;

(c) to broaden the Convention to cover all internal conflicts;

(d) to incorporate in the Convention effective mechanisms for implementation which rely on independent international monitoring;

(e) to ban blinding laser weapons in an additional protocol;

17. **Invites** parliaments and governments to prepare for and participate in the

XXVIth International Conference of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, to be held in Geneva in December 1995.

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