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Strengthening the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to natural disasters and other disaster situations

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 2816 (XXVI) of 14 December 1971, by which it established the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, and 36/225 of 17 December 1981, by which it reaffirmed the mandate of the Office and, *inter alia*, called for the strengthening and improvement of the capacity and effectiveness of the Office,

Recalling also its resolution 37/144 of 17 December 1982, in which the Assembly recognized that, in order to attain an effective co-ordination system of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance, it was essential to strengthen and improve the capacity and effectiveness of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator and of the United Nations system as a whole,

Recalling further Economic and Social Council resolution 1983/47 of 28 July 1983,

Recognizing that, as a result of those resolutions and other relevant resolutions and decisions, there is now in place a workable system to promote, facilitate and co-ordinate relief activities carried out by the United Nations system, in co-operation with Governments and voluntary agencies,

Noting that the operation of that system has been much improved but that there remains a need for its full application,

Noting further with appreciation the effective responses of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator to recent major disasters,

Recognizing that shortage of resources has been a constraint on an effective response of the United Nations to disaster situations,

Recognizing also that the primary responsibility for administration, relief operations and disaster preparedness lies with the affected countries and that the major part of the material assistance and human effort in disaster relief comes from the Governments of those countries,

Recognizing further the importance of the contribution of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and appropriate voluntary organizations,

1. Takes note with appreciation of the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to natural disasters and other disaster situations, as well as of his report on the work of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator and of the statement made by the Co-ordinator before the

Second Committee on 10 November 1983;

2. Notes with particular interest the observations and conclusions of the Secretary-General relating to the transportation, more rapid delivery and distribution of relief supplies, reconstruction and rehabilitation and the need for more effective monitoring and evaluation procedures to assess the way in which the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator and the international community as a whole have dealt with the mobilization and provision of disaster relief in particular cases;

3. Recognizes the importance of disaster preparedness and prevention activities, and calls upon the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, Governments and agencies involved to ensure that a high level of attention is given to them;

4. Reaffirms the sovereignty of individual Member States, recognizes the primary role of each State in caring for the victims of disasters occurring in its territory, and stresses that all relief operations should be carried out and co-ordinated in a manner consistent with the priorities and needs of the countries concerned;

5. Stresses that the quality and appropriateness of material and other assistance provided by the international community should meet the particular needs of the populations of disaster-affected areas;

6. Repeats its call to all Governments and competent organs and organizations to co-operate with the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator and to improve in particular their flow of information on relief assistance, action, plans and needs;

7. Requests the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator to continue and improve further the flow of information to Governments, organizations and agencies concerned, so that a more complete picture of relief activities assistance received and further requirements may be provided to all concerned;

8. Stresses the need for the continuance and further strengthening of the relations between the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator and appropriate voluntary organizations working in the area of disaster relief, including the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and requests the Secretary-General to consider the establishment of a small consultative group composed of executives of these major relief organizations, in their individual capacity, to provide advice, upon request, to the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator in the assessment of relief needs and in the preparation and execution of concerted relief programmes;

9. Authorizes the Secretary-General to permit the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator to respond to requests for emergency disaster assistance up to a total of \$600,000 in any one year, with a normal ceiling of \$50,000 per country in the case of any one disaster, within existing resources as far as possible;

10. Once again urgently calls upon all States to respond positively and expeditiously to the Secretary-General's appeals for contributions to meet natural disasters and other disaster situations;

11. Appeals to Governments for urgent voluntary contributions, channelled through the Trust Fund of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, to enable the Office to cover, inter alia, unforeseen expenses in connection with disaster relief operations;

12. Requests the Secretary-General, in consultation with Governments of both the donor and recipient countries, as well as with appropriate agencies, to submit to the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session, through the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1984, specific proposals to follow up the conclusions and problems identified in his comprehensive report, as well as in the present resolution.