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United Nations

A/RES/43/131

**General Assembly**

Distr. GENERAL

8 December 1988

ORIGINAL:  
ENGLISH

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A/RES/43/131  
75th plenary meeting  
8 December 1988

Humanitarian assistance to victims of natural disasters  
and similar emergency situations

The General Assembly,

Recalling that one of the purposes of the United Nations is to achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion,

Reaffirming the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States, and recognizing that it is up to each State first and foremost to take care of the victims of natural disasters and similar emergency situations occurring on its territory,

Deeply concerned about the suffering of the victims of natural disasters and similar emergency situations, the loss in human lives, the destruction of property and the mass displacement of populations that result from them,

Bearing in mind that natural disasters and similar emergency situations have grave consequences for the economic and social plans of all countries concerned,

Desiring that the international community should respond speedily and effectively to appeals for emergency humanitarian assistance made in particular through the Secretary-General,

Mindful of the importance of humanitarian assistance for the victims of natural disasters and similar emergency situations,

Recognizing that the international community makes an important contribution to the sustenance and protection of such victims, whose health and life may be seriously endangered,

Considering that the abandonment of the victims of natural disasters and similar emergency situations without humanitarian assistance constitutes a threat to human life and an offence to human dignity,

Concerned about the difficulties that victims of natural disasters and similar emergency situations may experience in receiving humanitarian assistance,

Convinced that, in providing humanitarian assistance, in particular the supply of food, medicines or health care, for which access to victims is essential, rapid relief will avoid a tragic increase in their number,

Aware that alongside the action of Governments and intergovernmental

organizations, the speed and efficiency of this assistance often depends on the help and aid of local and non-governmental organizations working with strictly humanitarian motives,

Recalling that, in the event of natural disasters and similar emergency situations, the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality must be given utmost consideration by all those involved in providing humanitarian assistance,

1. Reaffirms the importance of humanitarian assistance for the victims of natural disasters and similar emergency situations;

2. Reaffirms also the sovereignty of affected States and their primary role in the initiation, organization, co-ordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance within their respective territories;

3. Stresses the important contribution made in providing humanitarian assistance by intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations working with strictly humanitarian motives;

4. Invites all States in need of such assistance to facilitate the work of these organizations in implementing humanitarian assistance, in particular the supply of food, medicines and health care, for which access to victims is essential;

5. Appeals, therefore, to all States to give their support to these organizations working to provide humanitarian assistance, where needed, to the victims of natural disasters and similar emergency situations;

6. Urges States in proximity to areas of natural disasters and similar emergency situations, particularly in the case of regions that are difficult to reach, to participate closely with the affected countries in international efforts with a view to facilitating, to the extent possible, the transit of humanitarian assistance;

7. Calls upon all the intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organizations dealing with humanitarian assistance to co-operate as closely as possible with the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator or any other ad hoc mechanism set up by the Secretary-General in the co-ordination of aid;

8. Requests the Secretary-General to seek the views of Governments, intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organizations with regard to the possibility of enhancing the effectiveness of international mechanisms and increasing the speed of assistance in the best possible conditions for the victims of natural disasters and similar emergency situations, where needed, and to report his findings to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session;

9. Decides to consider this question at its forty-fifth session.