

AG/RES. 1682 (XXIX-O/99)

OAS NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION AND RESPONSE MECHANISMS

(Resolution adopted at the first plenary session,
held on June 7, 1999)

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

HAVING SEEN:

The documents “Natural Disaster Response Mechanisms within the Inter-American System” (CP/doc.3133/99 rev. 1) and “The OAS and Disaster Management” (CP/doc.3140/99);

The Plan of Action of the Second Summit of the Americas, held in Santiago, Chile in April 1998, in which the Heads of State and Government agreed to "mitigate the damages caused by the effects of 'El Niño' and other natural hazards, such as volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, earthquakes, and floods, and their impact on the economy and ecosystems, based on improved forecasting, prevention and response capacity, improved research and training methods to deal with natural hazards, and the application of science and technology to address the effects of climate variability on health, agriculture and water";

The Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World, prepared by the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction (1994), which concluded, *inter alia*, that disaster prevention “contributes to lasting improvement in safety and is essential to integrated disaster management”;

The Report of the Inter-American Dialogue on Disaster Reduction (1997), which concluded, *inter alia*, that international disaster reduction assistance should be “fully coordinated with national disaster reduction organizations and other relevant organizations involved in disaster reduction at the national, regional and local level, so that programs build on and contribute to existing national knowledge and experience”; and

The Miami Declaration on Disaster Reduction and Sustainable Development (1996), which noted that “disaster reduction and sustainable development are mutually supportive goals”;

CONSIDERING:

The severe loss of life, social dislocation, economic devastation, destruction of cultural heritage, and damage to property caused by natural disasters such as the El Niño phenomenon, Hurricanes Georges and Mitch, and the earthquake in Armenia, Colombia;

The long-term adverse impact of these natural disasters on the socioeconomic development of the countries and regions affected;

The importance of reducing the vulnerability of our countries to natural hazards or disasters through the appropriate use of sustainable development practices as an element of sustained economic and social development; and

The necessity of focusing OAS policy, strategic action, and development cooperation activities on reducing such vulnerabilities in the context of achieving sustainable development;

AWARE of scientific evidence on the likelihood of increasingly frequent and intense hurricanes and other recurring natural events, which will pose hazards in the Americas in the years to come; and

RECOGNIZING:

The value of the OAS as a forum for policy on strategic issues relating to inter-American disaster response mechanisms and reducing the vulnerability of economic and social infrastructure;

The need to strengthen the OAS role in disaster reduction, preparations for disasters, and disaster relief ;

The advisability of preventing the duplication of efforts in a context where other public, private, national, intergovernmental, and civil society organizations have acquired technical expertise in disaster management, especially disaster relief; and

The need to conclude the examination of the Report of the Working Group of the General Secretariat on the Revision of the Statutes of the Inter-American Emergency Aid Fund (FONDEM) (CP/CAAP-2242/96 corr. 1),

RESOLVES:

1. To strengthen the planning and disaster management activities of the OAS so as to respond more effectively to the increasingly frequent natural disasters in the Hemisphere, in close coordination and cooperation with other national, regional, and international mechanisms.

2. To establish the Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR) as the principal forum at the OAS for matters relating to natural disasters.

3. To provide that the principal task of the IACNDR shall be to serve as the Organization's leading forum for discussion of issues relating to natural disasters, in coordination with the competent national organizations; and that, in this regard, the IACNDR shall provide the Permanent Council with strategic thinking, recommendations on initiatives relating to natural disasters, and advice on methods of financing them, paying special attention to policies and programs designed to reduce the vulnerability of member states to natural disasters.

4. To provide that the IACNDR shall be chaired by the Secretary General of the OAS and comprise the Chair of the Permanent Council, the Assistant Secretary General of the OAS, the President of the Inter American Development Bank (IDB), the Director General of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Secretary General of the Pan-American Institute of Geography and

History (PAIGH), the Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), and the Executive Secretary of the Inter American Council for Integral Development (CIDI).

5. To instruct the Secretary General, when he considers it appropriate, to invite representatives of national, regional, or international organizations, such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF), the Inter-American Defense Board in accordance with AG/RES. 1240 (XXIII-O/93), the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA), and the Central America Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters (CEPRENAC) to participate in the IACNDR, and to take into consideration the initiatives and actions being carried out at the regional cooperation level.

6. To request that the IACNDR provide the Permanent Council, no later than November 30, 1999, with specific recommendations on :

- a. The most effective manner in which the OAS, with the involvement of the competent national, regional, and international bodies, should participate in the implementation of policies and programs for mutual assistance during emergencies declared by member states, taking into account the effectiveness of OAS natural disaster response mechanisms in the wake of Hurricanes Georges and Mitch and the earthquake in Armenia, Colombia;
- b. The advisability of utilizing PADF warehouse facilities for storage of emergency relief items, in coordination with national, regional, and international mechanisms and other entities of the inter-American system;
- c. The advisability of strengthening activities under the White Helmets Initiative, established within the OAS, to assist countries affected by natural disasters;
- d. The advisability of establishing and periodically replenishing a permanent emergency fund to assist countries affected by natural disasters;
- e. The most appropriate mechanism by which the OAS should assist member states affected by natural disasters in preparing and implementing natural disaster reconstruction programs with international financing;
- f. The reinvigoration of OAS/UN cooperation mechanisms in disaster-related areas;
- g. The most advantageous use of OAS advocacy, public information, and outreach activities, including training in early warning programs and disaster planning workshops;
- h. The implementation of appropriate mechanisms for mobilizing the resources necessary to carry out the recommendations of the IACNDR.

7. To provide that the IACNDR shall meet at least quarterly, and that its Chair shall have the discretion to call IACNDR meetings on a more frequent basis as necessary.

8. To instruct the Secretary General to create an internal committee on natural disasters, composed of personnel from all areas of the General Secretariat responsible for the different aspects of disaster reduction, management, and relief, in order to support the activities to be carried out by the IACNDR.

9. To instruct the IACNDR to evaluate the Report of the Working Group of the General Secretariat on the Revision of the Statutes of the Inter-American Emergency Aid Fund (FONDEM) in order to present the necessary recommendations to the thirtieth regular session of the OAS General Assembly.

10. To promote the exchange of technical and scientific personnel in the area of research into adverse events, through internships, seminars, conferences, or exchange programs among institutions of OAS member states, within resources allocated in the program-budget and other resources.

11. To request that the Permanent Council prepare and approve draft Statutes for the IACNDR.