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Agenda item 12

REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Byelorussian Soviet
Socialist Republic, China, Czechoslovakia, France, German
Democratic Republic, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy,
Japan, Malaysia*, Poland, Spain, Turkey, Ukrainian Soviet
Socialist Republic and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics:
revised draft resolution

International Decade for Natural Disaster ReductionThe General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 42/169 of 11 December 1987, by which it decided to designate the 1990s as a decade in which the international community, under the auspices of the United Nations, would pay special attention to fostering international co-operation in the field of natural disaster reduction,

Bearing in mind the relevant provisions of its resolutions 42/169 and 43/202 of 20 December 1988, as well as Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/99, in which the Council recommended that the General Assembly take action to develop an appropriate framework for attaining the objective and goals of the Decade,

Considering that natural disasters have adversely affected the lives of a great number of people and caused considerable damage to infrastructure and property world wide, especially in developing countries,

Recognizing the importance of environmental protection for the prevention and mitigation of natural disasters,

* On behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77.

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Considering further that the international community as a whole has now improved its capacity to confront this problem, and that fatalism about natural disasters is no longer justified,

Recognizing the necessity for the international community to demonstrate the strong political determination required to mobilize and use existing scientific and technical knowledge to mitigate natural disasters, bearing in mind in particular the needs of developing countries,

Recognizing further the important responsibility of the United Nations system as a whole for promoting international co-operation in order to mitigate natural disasters, provide assistance and co-ordinate disaster relief, preparedness and prevention,

Recalling the specific responsibilities and functions in the field of disaster prevention and preparedness entrusted to the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator as set out in its resolution 2816 (XXVI) of 14 December 1971,

Bearing in mind the crucial role of professional and other non-governmental organizations, particularly scientific and technological societies, humanitarian groups and investment institutions, whose participation in the implementation of specific programmes planned for the Decade is highly required,

Bearing in mind further the need for the United Nations system to pay special attention to the least developed, land-locked and island developing countries in that regard,

Taking note, with appreciation, of the report of the Secretary-General on the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, 1/

Emphasizing that appropriate emergency planning for natural disasters and its integration in national development plans could also be very helpful in preventing as a consequence, other kinds of disasters, such as those of an industrial or technological nature,

Expressing its appreciation for the work done by the International Ad Hoc Group of Experts on the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, which submitted its report to the Secretary-General in June 1989, 2/

Bearing in mind the common position on natural disasters of the Ninth Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Belgrade in September 1989, 3/

1/ A/44/322-E/1989/114.

2/ A/44/322-E/1989/114/Add.1, annex.

3/ See A/44/551-S/20870, annex.

1. Proclaims the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, beginning on 1 January 1990;
2. Decides to designate 1 October International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction, and to observe that Day annually during the Decade in a manner befitting the objective and goals of the Decade;
3. Adopts the International Framework of Action for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction contained in the annex to the present resolution;
4. Requests the Secretary-General to submit, to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session, a progress report on the implementation of the present resolution, including the organizational arrangements made for the Decade, and on the status of existing international protocols and conventions for mutual assistance in case of disasters;
5. Also requests the Secretary-General to bring the present resolution to the attention of all Governments, intergovernmental organizations, appropriate non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and competent scientific institutions in the field of disaster mitigation;
6. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its forty-sixth session an item entitled "International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction".

ANNEX

International Framework of Action for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction

A. OBJECTIVE AND GOALS

1. The objective of the Decade is to reduce through concerted international action, especially in developing countries, the loss of life, property damage, and social and economic disruption caused by natural disasters, such as earthquakes, windstorms, tsunamis, floods, landslides, volcanic eruptions, wildfires, grasshopper and locust infestations, drought and desertification and other calamities of natural origin.
2. The goals of the Decade are:
 - (a) To improve the capacity of each country to mitigate the effects of natural disasters expeditiously and effectively, paying special attention to assisting developing countries in the assessment of disaster damage potential and in the establishment of early warning systems and disaster-resistant structures when and where needed;
 - (b) To devise appropriate guidelines and strategies for applying existing scientific and technical knowledge, taking into account the cultural and economic diversity among nations;

(c) To foster scientific and engineering endeavours aimed at closing critical gaps in knowledge in order to reduce loss of life and property;

(d) To disseminate existing and new technical information related to measures for the assessment, prediction and mitigation of natural disasters;

(e) To develop measures for the assessment, prediction, prevention and mitigation of natural disasters through programmes of technical assistance and technology transfer, demonstration projects, and education and training, tailored to specific disasters and locations, and to evaluate the effectiveness of those programmes.

B. POLICY MEASURES TO BE TAKEN AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

3. All Governments are called upon to:

(a) Formulate national disaster-mitigation programmes, as well as economic, land use and insurance policies for disaster prevention; and particularly in developing countries, to fully integrate them into their national development programmes;

(b) Participate during the Decade in concerted international action for the reduction of natural disasters and, as appropriate, establish national committees in co-operation with the relevant scientific and technological communities and other concerned sectors with a view to attaining the objective and goals of the Decade;

(c) Encourage their local administrations to take appropriate steps to mobilize the necessary support from the public and private sectors and to contribute to achieving the purposes of the Decade;

(d) Keep the Secretary-General informed of the plans of their countries and of assistance that can be provided so that the United Nations may become an international centre for the exchange of information and the co-ordination of international efforts concerning activities in support of the objective and goals of the Decade, thus enabling each State to benefit from the experience of other countries;

(e) Take measures, as appropriate, to increase public awareness of damage risk probabilities and of the significance of preparedness, prevention, relief and recovery activities with respect to natural disasters and to enhance community preparedness through education, training and other means, taking into account the specific role of the news media;

(f) Pay due attention to the impact of natural disasters on health care, particularly to activities to mitigate the vulnerability of hospitals and health centres, as well as the impact on food storage facilities, human shelter and other social and economic infrastructure;

(g) Improve the early international availability of appropriate emergency supplies through the storage or earmarking of such supplies in disaster-prone areas.

4. Scientific and technological institutions, financial institutions, including banks and insurance companies, and industrial enterprises, foundations and other related non-governmental organizations are encouraged to support and participate fully in the programmes and activities of the Decade prepared and implemented by the international community, including Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

C. ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

5. The organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system are urged to accord priority, as appropriate and in a concerted manner, to natural disaster preparedness, prevention, relief and recovery including economic damage risk assessment in their operational activities. The Secretary-General is requested, in this regard, to ensure that adequate means are made available to the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator so that it may diligently discharge its specific role and responsibilities in the field of disaster mitigation and response in conformity with its mandate, as contained in General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI) of 14 December 1971.

6. The Secretary-General, through the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat, and in close association with the relevant organizations of the United Nations system, as well as national information authorities, is requested to assist in the formulation and implementation during the Decade of public information programmes aimed at raising awareness of disaster prevention among the general public.

7. The United Nations resident co-ordinators and the field representatives of the United Nations system are requested to work closely and in a co-ordinated manner with Governments to achieve the objective and goals of the Decade.

8. The regional commissions of the United Nations are urged to play an active role in implementing the activities of the Decade, considering that natural disasters often transcend national boundaries.

9. The Secretary-General is requested to designate the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation as a focal point to secure co-ordination of the programmes and activities of the United Nations system referred to above.

10. The Secretary-General is requested to report biennially to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, on the activities of the Decade.

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D. ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS DURING THE DECADE

1. Special Advisory Council

11. The Secretary-General is requested to establish, with due regard to equitable geographical representation, a Special Advisory Council, consisting of a limited number of internationally eminent persons, in order to provide him with overall advice with respect to the Decade, to take appropriate action to promote public awareness and to mobilize the necessary support from the public and private sectors.

2. Scientific and Technical Committee on the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction

12. The Secretary-General is requested to establish, with due regard to equitable geographical representation and covering the diversity of disaster-mitigation issues, a Scientific and Technical Committee on the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, consisting of 20 to 25 scientific and technical experts selected in consultation with their Governments on the basis of their personnel capacities and qualifications and including experts from the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system.

13. The role of the Committee is to develop overall programmes to be taken into account in bilateral and multilateral co-operation for the Decade, paying attention to priorities and gaps in technical knowledge identified at the national level, in particular by national committees; to assess and evaluate the activities carried out in the course of the Decade; and to make recommendations on the overall programmes in an annual report to the Secretary-General.

3. Secretariat

14. The Secretary-General is requested to establish a small secretariat, as follows:

(a) The secretariat shall be established at the United Nations Office at Geneva, in close association with the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, with its members drawn from staff seconded from relevant United Nations organizations and, as appropriate, from governmental and non-governmental organizations, which shall bear the costs involved;

(b) The secretariat shall be responsible for the day-to-day co-ordination of Decade activities and shall provide substantive and secretarial support to the Special Advisory Council and the Committee, as well as for other related activities.

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E. FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

15. It is recommended that extrabudgetary resources be provided for implementation of the Decade and, therefore, that voluntary contributions from Governments, international organizations and other sources, including the private sector, be strongly encouraged. To this end, a trust fund shall be established by the Secretary-General, who will be entrusted with its administration.

F. REVIEW

16. The Economic and Social Council will carry out a mid-term review of the implementation of the International Framework of Action during its second regular session of 1994 and report its findings to the General Assembly.
