
***I. Message from the
Secretary-General
of the United Nations***

As we begin the third year of the decade dedicated by the United Nations to reducing losses caused by natural disasters, I take great pleasure in sending this message.

The International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR), which the General Assembly proclaimed for the decade of the 1990s, has the objective of substantially cutting the impact of natural hazards in human casualties, property damage, and social and economic disruption.

As we begin year three of the decade, we can note with considerable satisfaction that the mechanisms for implementing the IDNDR are in place and functioning well, including the Scientific and Technical Committee (STC), the Special High-Level Council (SHLC), and the Secretariat.

The STC, which is responsible for overall IDNDR programmes, has defined the strategy, established targets, and selected international demonstration projects. The SHLC issued the New York Declaration at its inaugural meeting on the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction, 9 October 1991, endorsing the STC plans and calling for increased efforts on behalf of the decade.

The coming year will see a shift in emphasis from developing decade plans to launching and strengthening projects and activities. As the focus of the decade is on building and strengthening national capabilities, this goal will be accorded the highest priority in the years ahead in the United Nations. Working with the national IDNDR committees and focal points, we will provide assistance for national-level organizations, particularly with regard to information on disaster mitigation strategies, transfer of technology, and economic benefits.

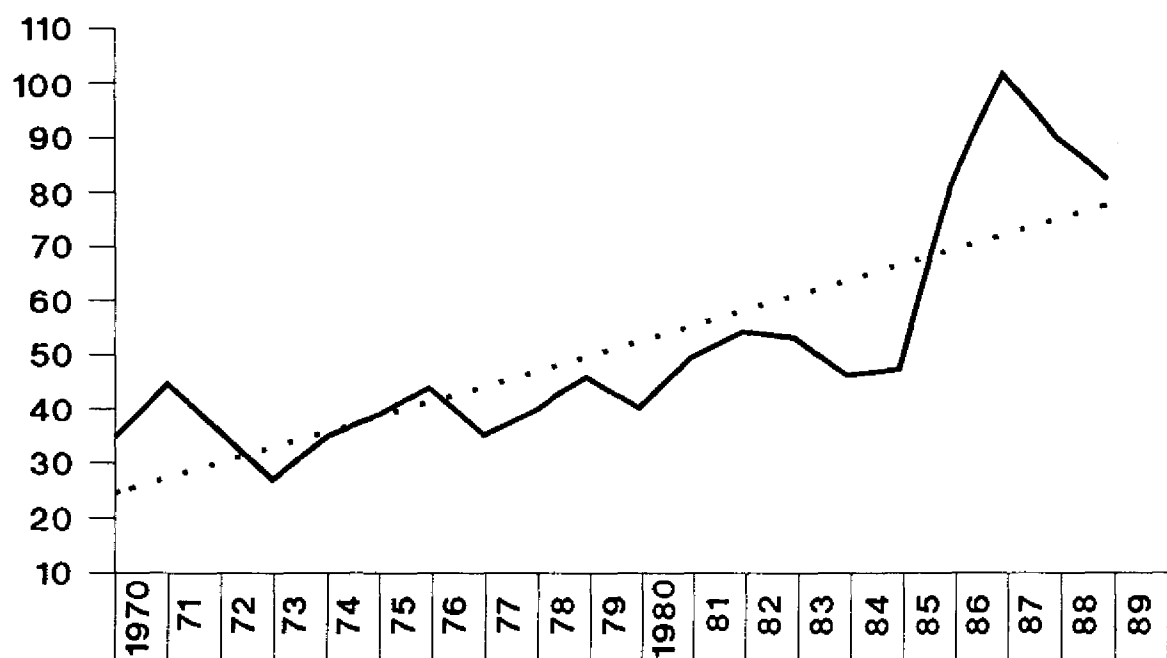
It is of the utmost importance that countries that have extensive experience in applying disaster mitigation, having already demonstrated the effectiveness of measures to reduce losses, continue providing leadership in the decade. Such leadership will be especially important as we seek to make disaster mitigation considerations an integral part of the planning process to avoid wasting limited resources. The world is becoming more aware of the linkage between environmental and developmental problems, and we also are recognizing that natural hazards are often the event that converts one of these problems into a catastrophe.

The United Nations welcomes the commitment of the international community to the humanitarian goals of the IDNDR. Through better planning, wiser allocation of resources, and effective implementation of disaster mitigation strategies, joining in a global initiative, we can make the world a safer place. Moreover, we can give people a sense of greater control over their own destinies. This is a noble endeavor, one that deserves our best efforts.

December 1991

Message of the Secretary-General

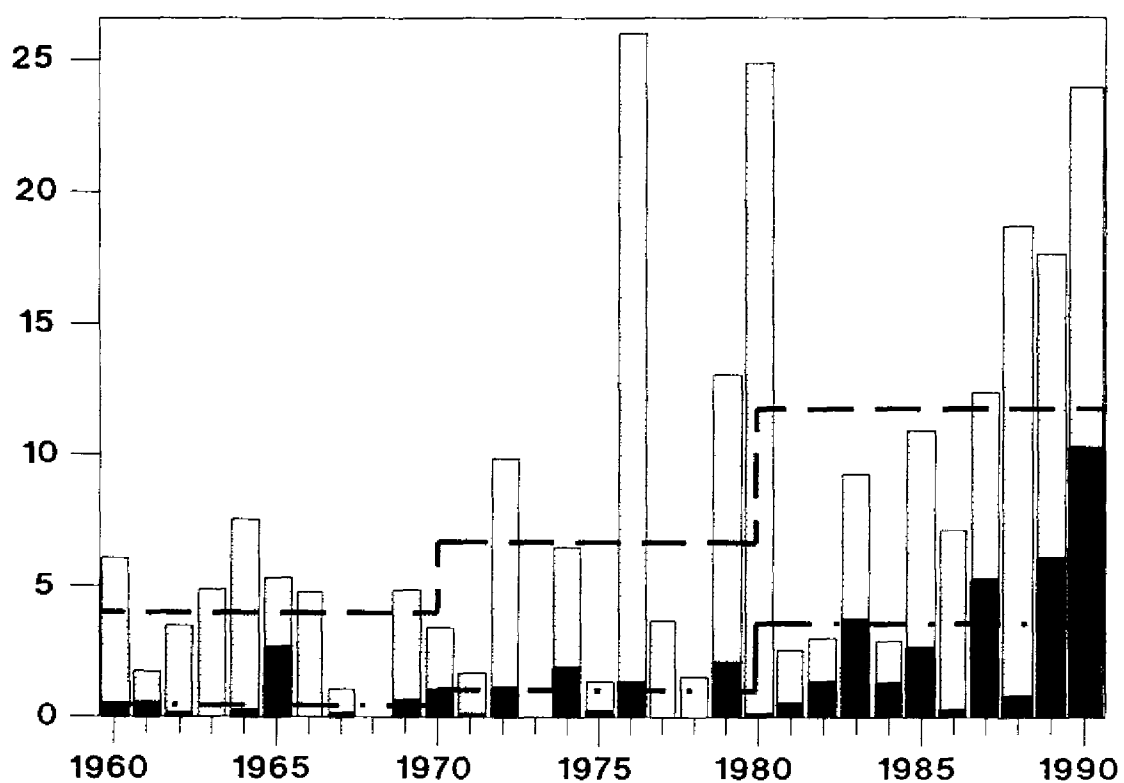
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Number of natural disasters during 1970-1989 (. . . . = Trend).

Source: "Sigma 2/90, Swiss Reinsurance Company", 1990

***II. The Launching of the Decade -
United Nations General Assembly
Resolution 44/236***



Economic losses and insured losses due to natural disasters during 1960-1989.

(■■■) Average annual economic losses (per decade)

(— • —) Average annual insured losses (per decade)

Source: Munich Reinsurance Company, 1991.

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 44/236.

INTERNATIONAL DÉCADE FOR NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 42/169 of 11 December 1987, in 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 resolution 42/169 and its resolution 43/202 of 20 December 1988, and taking note of Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/99 of 26 July 1989, in which the Council recommended that the General Assembly take action to develop an appropriate framework for international co-operation to attain the objective and goals of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction,

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,

Considering 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 also 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, the participation of which in the implementation of specific programmes planned for the Decade is highly desirable,

*At its 44th session,
the General Assembly
proclaimed the
International
Decade for Natural
Disaster Reduction
on 22 December 1989,
adopting
resolution 44/236*

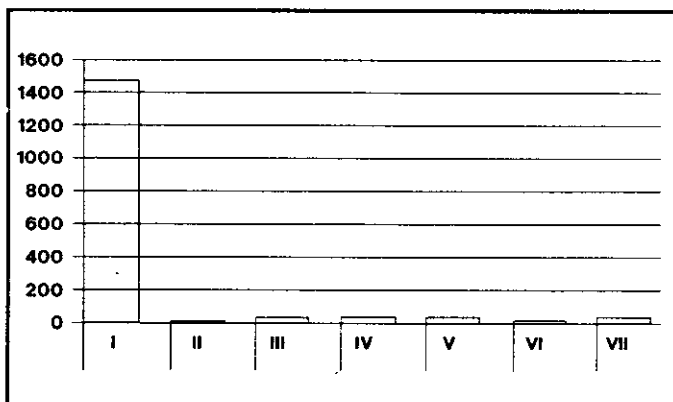
Also bearing in mind the need for the United Nations system to pay special attention to the least developed, land-locked and island developing countries in that regard,

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

Taking note, with appreciation, of the report of the Secretary-General, ^{1/}

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 ^{2/} to the Secretary-General,

Bearing in mind the common position on natural disasters of the Ninth Conference of Heads of State or Government of



Number of victims caused by major disasters during 1970-1989. Natural Disasters account for the most significant losses.

I = Natural Disasters

II = Major fires

III = Aviation

IV = Waterborne traffic

V = Traffic

VI = Collapse of buildings and bridges, mine disasters

VII = Miscellaneous

Source: "Sigma 6/90, Swiss Reinsurance Company".

Non-Aligned Countries, held at Belgrade from 4 to 7 September 1989, ^{3/}

1. *Proclaims* the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, beginning on 1 January 1990;

2. *Decides* to designate the Second Wednesday of October International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction, to be observed annually during the Decade by the international community 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 cases of disaster;

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".

85th plenary meeting

22 December 1989

^{1/} A/44/322-E/1989/114 and Add.1 and 2.

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

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

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

A. OBJECTIVE AND GOALS

Annex to Resolution 44/236

1. The objective of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction 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:

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

(b) To 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 tech-

nological communities and other concerned sectors with a view to attaining the objective and goals of the Decade,

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

(d) To 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) To take measures, as appropriate, to increase public awareness of damage risk probabilities and of the significance of preparedness, prevention, relief and short-term 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) To pay due attention to the impact of natural disasters on health care, particularly to activities to reduce the vulnerability of hospitals and health centres, as well as the impact on food storage facilities, human shelter and other social and economic infrastructures;

(g) To 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. ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

5. The organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations are urged to accord priority, as appropriate and in a concerted manner, to natural disaster preparedness, prevention, relief and short-term 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 Coordinator 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).

6. The Secretary-General is requested, in close association with the relevant organizations of the United Nations system, in particular through the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, as well as national information authorities, to assist in the formulation and implemen-

tation during the Decade of public information programmes aimed at raising public awareness of disaster prevention.

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 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, in accordance with its mandate as set out in General Assembly resolution 32/197 of 20 December 1977, as the focal point for overview and co-ordination of the programmes and activities of the United Nations system referred to in the present resolution, in close co-operation with the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator and, as appropriate, in consultation with the Director of the Secretariat of the Decade, mentioned in paragraph 14 of the present annex.



**Floods. Charleville, QLD
Australia. April 1990.
Courtesy: Australian IDNDR
Coordination Committee**

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.

D. ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS DURING THE DECADE

1. Special high-Level council

11. The Secretary-General is requested to establish, with due regard to equitable geographic representation, a special high-level council, consisting of a limited number of internationally prominent persons, which would provide him with general advice with respect to the Decade, take appropriate action to promote public awareness and 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 geographic representation and covering the diversity of disaster-mitigation issues, a scientific and technical committee on the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, consisting of twenty to twenty-five scientific and technical experts selected in consultation with their Governments on the basis of their personal capacities and qualifications, including

experts from the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system.

13. The role of the committee shall be 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, as well as 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, to be funded by extrabudgetary resources, 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, as appropriate, from the international community of disaster reduction experts and other relevant experts seconded, *inter alia*, from competent United Nations organizations, Governments and non-governmental organizations;

(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 high-level council and the scientific and technical committee, as well as for other related activities.



Cyclone Herbie, Cape Cuvier, WA, Australia. May 1988. Courtesy: Australian IDNDR Co-ordination Committee.

E. FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

15. It is recommended that extrabudgetary resources be provided for implementation of the activities 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, during its second regular session of 1994, will carry out a mid-term review of the implementation of the International Framework of Action for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and report its findings to the General Assembly.