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### ***III. New York Declaration of the Special High-Level Council***

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**The Council considered that:**

*Whereas* the peoples and countries of the world are afflicted by recurring natural disasters that cause enormous loss of life, set back economic and social development, and affect the political stability of nations;

*Whereas* the scientific, technical educational, social and political resources exist to greatly reduce the human and economic losses from natural disasters and have been successfully applied in some countries;

*Whereas* many countries that have not implemented natural disaster-mitigation measures are beginning to take steps to reduce their vulnerability under the auspices of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction; and

*Whereas* the Special High-Level Council for the Decade has been appointed by the Secretary-General at the request of the General Assembly to advise on actions to mitigate the impacts of natural disasters;

**The Council concluded that:**

Proclamation of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction offers an extraordinary opportunity to reduce the impact of natural disasters, provided that the possibility to confront hazards through enhanced awareness, preparedness and preventive actions is recognized world wide and adequate resources are directed towards this goal.

Reducing vulnerability to natural disasters is a major goal requiring concerted and coordinated efforts of Governments, the organizations of the United Nations system, the world's scientific and technical community, volunteer organizations, schools and educational institutions, the private sector, the media and individuals at risk. Vulnerability assessment and early warning of potential disasters and effective communication to the public are essential.

Developing countries and highly vulnerable groups, especially children, should be given the greatest priority in disaster-mitigation activities, including actions to address the psychological effects of disasters. Among the means for accomplishing this goal are locating and constructing housing, infrastructure, schools and hospitals to avoid and resist hazards, educating students for self-protection and using the media to reach the vulnerable population.

Mitigation actions related to natural disasters should be linked with similar actions in dealing with man-made and environmental disasters.

***The Special High-Level Council of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction held its inaugural session at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 9 and 10 October 1991 to undertake its role to advise the Secretary-General, promote awareness and mobilize resources for the Decade***

**The Council called upon:**

All current and potential participants in disaster-mitigation efforts, including resources from academia, volunteer organizations, and commerce and industry, as well as Governments, to contribute to reducing disaster vulnerability.

Countries to form national committees for the Decade, including high-level representatives of planning and development agencies, scientific and technical groups, volunteer organizations, the private sector, and the media; and to provide committees with the means to stimulate and coordinate national disaster-mitigation activities.

All countries to recognize the importance of incorporating natural disaster activities within plans to achieve sustainable development and to undertake actions to reduce vulnerabilities through the application of disaster-mitigation strategies. This policy should be brought to the attention of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, to be held in June 1992.

The national, regional and international developmental and-financial organizations, as well as the private sector and the media, to give high priority to requests for assistance in reducing natural disaster vulnerabilities.

Countries having disaster-mitigation resources to aid those needing assistance by strengthening local and national capabilities, developing human resources and supporting the institutions of the Decade, particularly by providing the resources necessary to support the functions of the Decade secretariat and to make possible the information and public awareness activities of the Decade.

**The Council decided to:**

Endorse the work of the Scientific and Technical Committee, particularly the outcome of its Guatemala meeting as reflected in its first annual report to the Secretary-General, including the targets identified for the Decade.

Pursue the full involvement of private and public business sectors in view of their inherent vitality and potential for reducing the impact on the socio-economic systems of vulnerable countries by limiting the disruption of productive activities and accelerating the restoration of essential services and the generation of income for the affected population, particularly for developing countries.

Suggest that the General Assembly endorse bringing together representatives of national committees in a world conference on natural disaster reduction in 1994, which would contribute to the mid-term review of the Decade.

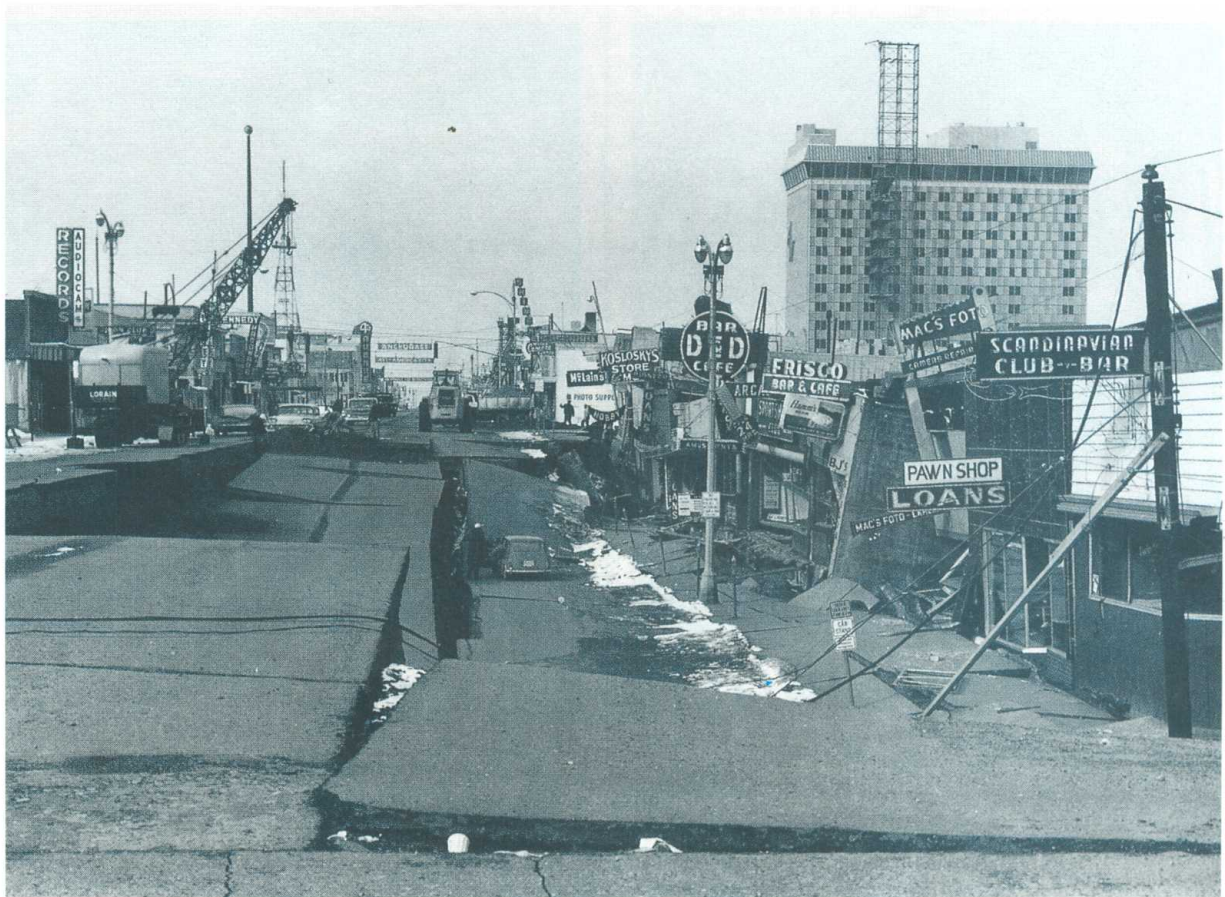
Meet at least annually to vigorously pursue its responsibilities for the Decade, and at its next session to focus on improvement of capabilities at the national level, particularly human resources, increased involvement of



the media and the private sector, development of incentives for natural disaster mitigation and international coordination.

Undertake individual activities on behalf of the Decade at the regional, subregional and national levels, particularly in increasing public awareness of natural hazards and in mobilizing resources and stimulating political support for disaster-mitigation strategies.

*New York,  
10 October 1991*



During the Alaskan earthquake of March 1964 (Magnitude 8.4-8.6 on the Richter scale) a landslide developed in Anchorage's Fourth Avenue district. Streets buckled and slumped and buildings dropped as much as 4 meters. Source: US Bureau of Land Management. Republished from "Confronting Natural Disasters. An International Decade for Natural Hazard Reduction", National Academy Press, Washington, D.C. 1987.