current IDNDR.

While many criteria for an effective IS are already met in one way or another, the situation is far from ideal. Wisely using available world-wide resources and technologies, and incorporating and validating new and emerging technologies, particularly in the multimedia domain, the information systems will help the mitigation practitioners and vulnerable communities, and thus the whole mankind, to enter the next century in better shape than would be possible without them.

9 Recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of information systems for disaster reduction

1. Governments at all levels should have pro-active policies, customs, tariff and other regulations for enabling technologies and information exchange, including the Internet, satellites networks and others.

2. Governments should consider regular funding or contributions to IS via appropriate national departments and agencies and through their participation in international bodies. Disaster mitigation information systems are essentially a public good, and should be treated as such. Additional funding should come from private industry and communities themselves.

3. Telecommunications services providers should increase their involvement in IS by participating in the evaluation of user needs, setting up and maintaining special pricing, enabling simple and easy access to experts, practitioners and local communities, and passing on benefits of improved technologies and decreasing costs.

4. Private industry should continue and increase their sponsorship to the builders and users of disaster mitigation IS: after all, the industry benefits, too. Many corporations are already actively contributing their knowledge and skills: ways should be found to increase their participation around the world.

5. Disaster mitigation organizations on all levels should interact with the IS builders and suppliers by sharing knowledge and helping to standardize the information to increase the information systemís effectiveness.

6. The IS builders should find an effective mechanism for notifying the widest number of practitioners of the availability and capabilities of an IS and of any new developments. They should strengthen links among the community of IS providers to share the knowledge, skills and possibly resources, strive to avoid duplication and wasting scarce resources.

7. Final users should educate themselves to the fullest extent possible on the use of available IS, using available material, seminars and training. Users should provide feedback to suppliers and developers freely and frequently to maintain the relevance and quality of information.

8. The IDNDR should maintain the momentum and direction on a national, regional and international scale. Co-ordinating and initiating roles are important, as is involvement in international seminars to develop and validate new concepts.

9. The international community at large should support conferences to reaffirm strategies for further evolution of information systems for disaster preparedness and mitigation and to generate support for this important endeavour.

Eugene Staffa