

PRESENTATION BY MR. PEDRO AGUAYO-CUBILLO, AT THE MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE OF THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR REDUCTION OF NATURAL DISASTERS, WITH THE WORLD BANK, TO BE HELD IN WASHINGTON ON 11 JUNE 1998: "CONFRONTING OUR VULNERABILITY TO THE EL NIÑO PHENOMENON"

INTRODUCTION.

The consequences of the El Niño phenomenon in Ecuador are of such a magnitude that I am not exaggerating if I tell you that this is one of the factors most heavily hampering our country's development possibilities over the past two decades. And this is largely because, in our entire history, we have not yet learned to live with recurring natural phenomena like this one. Moreover, the development models that we have followed over the years have laid the groundwork for the physical, economic and social conditions that have made us a highly vulnerable country when such a phenomenon occurs.

Fortunately, there is now the national interest and political will to face up to this problem, from its root causes. Therefore, we have come to this meeting of the Technical and Scientific Committee of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, to tell you how Ecuador has dealt with this event and, more importantly, what actions we will be carrying out in the reconstruction phase, in order to guarantee development of a safer society that will be less vulnerable to hazards of this type.

I would like to refer to some initiatives that the Government of Ecuador has taken internationally in regard to El Niño, which show our interest and concern in this area:

- In November 1997, the National Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology (INAMHI) organized, jointly with the ORSTOM institute of France, an International Seminar on El Niño, to discuss and analyze the state of the art in predicting and monitoring this phenomenon, and its main effects. It was attended by 211 representatives of 18 countries.
- During the second half of 1997, the standing mission of Ecuador in the United Nations worked intensely to promote a resolution that would make it possible to strengthen international cooperation mechanisms to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon, particularly in the developing countries most prone to suffering serious damage because of it, and to facilitate the development of a consensus-based, integrated international strategy to prevent, mitigate and rehabilitate the damage resulting from the phenomenon. These actions contributed significantly to this proposal's approval by the UN General Assembly (Resolution A/52/200 of 18 December 1997).