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Disaster Reduction in Development after the IDNDR

There are three principal development themes adopted by the countries of the hemisphere following the end of the Cold War: Environment and Sustainable Development, Trade, and Democracy. Now it is necessary to address vulnerability reduction to natural hazard issues in the context of development. The three principal questions as to mainstreaming disaster reduction in development that refer to the three principal themes of development in the hemisphere are:

1. To what extent must the structure and content of disaster management, particularly at the international and national levels, be remolded as an integral part development activities?
2. What are the limitations of cost/benefit analysis in justifying investments in vulnerability reduction and in their absence what justification will be used to such investments attending to the needs of the poor?
3. What legacy of action will the IDNDR leave with international and regional organizations, institutions, corporations, and national and local governments and businesses, building on the already thousands of contributions to the Decade?

To the first question on remolding disaster management into development addresses the issue of environment and sustainable development and an integrated approach, it is critical that

- Transformation after a disaster includes where vulnerability reduction of economic and social infrastructure as part of the development agenda, and
- Other countries implement the Plan of Action of the Sustainable Development Summit calling for the incorporation of disaster prevention and mitigation in national development plans.

To do so:

- Reconstruction activities must be carried out in the context of development decisions, not replacement projects
- International and regional organizations and forums must assist and support national governments

The second question of economic justification of investment in lower risk and protecting the poor addresses the issue of trade. Given that financial issues can take precedent over economic and physical environment issues, it is critical that

- We recognize that as we learn more about who is vulnerable and why, we will have to also learn how to use this information in a highly charged political and technical atmosphere,
- We resist further movement to make "disaster management" a sector,
- We associate the poor's vulnerability to natural hazards with their other types of vulnerability, and
- We strengthen efforts to identify vulnerability reduction to natural hazards as part of environmental management.

To do so, we must

- Deal with financial, economic and physical risk in a concurrent fashion,
- Create new tools for vulnerability and risk assessment in the context of development projects, and
- Clearly define for investment projects the anticipated financial, economic and physical risk levels due to natural hazards.

As to the third question of a legacy as we go forward, we must first and foremost recognize that an integrated, multisectoral approach to mainstreaming disaster reduction in development must take place in

¹ The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States nor its member countries.