

In man nature has harmed itself, and only in his moral ability is an uncertain balance left open for the disrupted certainty of its self-regulation. (H. Jonas)

International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction

3. All Governments are called upon 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 technological communities and other concerned sectors with a view to attaining the objective and goals of the Decade;

Excerpt from United Nations Resolution No. 44/236 of 22.12.1989

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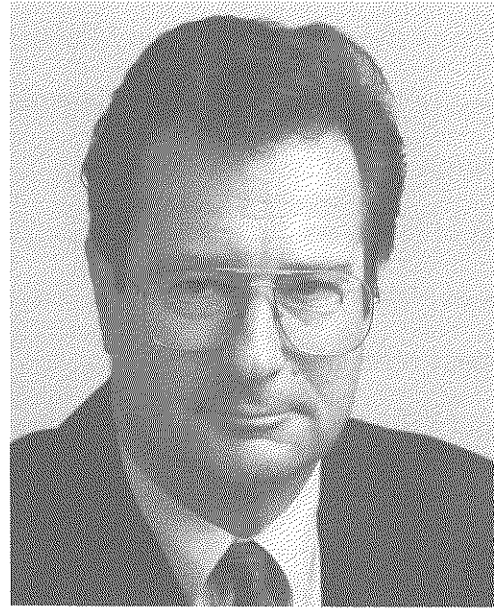
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Address by the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs

Almost every day news reach us about natural disasters in the world such as drought and famine, earth-quakes and storm surges, an indication of the growing disaster potential on this earth. This affects the industrialized countries also, as a consequence of the gradual climate change. However, the developing countries are especially disaster prone, because due to their poverty and technical backwardness very often they are defencelessly exposed to the effects of natural hazards. If no solution to the problems of poverty and environment is found there will be no way of reducing their vulnerability to natural disasters. Moreover, specific technical and scientific efforts are required to better protect the people, their buildings as well as their economic and social basis of life against the after-effects of natural disaster.

In view of this, I place great importance on the International Decade of Disaster Reduction (1990-1999). The aims are part of the central tasks of sustainable development and I think it is only consistent that the program and aims of this Decade have been incorporated into the "Agenda 21" - a program of development and environment campaigns for the next century - which has been resolved at the "United Nations Conference on Environment and Development" in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. The most important aim of the Decade, however, is the creation of disaster protection structures and the securing of the development process against effects of natural disasters in developing countries.

I am very happy that since the declaration of the International Decade of Disaster Reduction by the United Nations in December 1989 a National Committee has been set up in the Federal Republic of Germany, with the support of the Federal Government, which has already developed remarkable initiatives in



practical and scientific respect. To me the structure of the German Committee seems particularly interesting, being composed of members of the Federal Parliament, development and relief organizations as well as scientific institutions, the media and economic enterprises such as construction business and insurances. This wide diversification is a solid basis for a successful operation. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs also has financially supported the German participation in the Decade from the very beginning. In 1992 two Million DM were made available from the funds for humanitarian disaster and emergency relief operations. In the draft of the Federal budget for 1993 the same amount is provided for. I wish the German Committee for the International Decade of Natural Disaster Reduction success for its important task.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs
Dr. Klaus Kinkel

Address by the Chairman of the German IDNDR

The amount of natural disasters has increased in the past years to a frightening extent. Since 1990 more than 200.000 people have lost their lives in natural disasters. The economic damage can hardly be assessed. In view of the population explosion and a probable climatic change, the vulnerability to disaster is still increasing. Especially the developing countries, though, are the least prepared for such disasters. Contrary to the industrialized countries they do not - or only very rudimentary - have a network for disaster relief organizations, disaster relief plans or even an early-warning system. The development in these countries is set back by every natural disaster.

To stop this development the United Nations have declared the nineties to be the international decade for natural disaster reduction. Corresponding to the UN resolution for the IDNDR the German IDNDR Committee has proclaimed as its objective to support the developing countries in taking actions for the reduction of disasters and in establishing a natural disaster prevention system. This calls for political initiative in the first place, in order to arouse in the political authorities an awareness for the problem of natural disaster prevention. Natural disaster prevention has to become an integral part of the German development cooperation. However, the research of what causes natural disasters and the social after-effects of such disasters is as important a task. The Scientific Advisory Board of the German IDNDR Committee is aiming for a close cooperation with the scientists in the countries concerned. Germany is affected very little by natural disasters, yet disposes of specific expert know-how with regard to natural disaster prevention. To con-



centrate this know-how and to make it available to the developing countries will be one of the main objectives of the Committee's work. The German Committee wants to contribute to giving the potential in our country for natural disaster prevention as much weight as possible within the frame of the United Nations and its special organizations as well as within the European cooperation and the interrelationship of the National Committees. The German IDNDR Committee hopes to contribute with this brochure to promote the awareness for the concern in natural disaster prevention, not only in technical and political institutions, but also in broad public.

Hans-Jürgen Wischnewski
Former Federal Minister