

Draft Intervention for Possible Use in Third Committee on the Subject of
"Assistance in Cases of Natural Disaster"

Mme Chairman, my Delegation supports the recommendations which the Economic and Social Council has made in its resolution 1090 (c). We are in particular in complete agreement with the strong case which the Secretary-General has made in his report of January 5, 1965, to the Economic and Social Council against the establishment of a United Nations Disaster Fund through voluntary contributions. The Secretary-General has proposed instead that he be authorized to draw a certain amount of money from the Regular Budget of the United Nations for relief assistance purposes. We support this proposal and agree with the Secretary-General's view that such funds as are made available should be used on the advice of the Red Cross and the United Nations resident representative in the area of disaster-stricken country. We are of the view that, in this connection, the United Nations resident representative should be given full responsibility for the co-ordination in the field of all United Nations relief activities in individual cases.

Operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution before us "requests member states, when offering emergency assistance in cases of natural disaster, to inform and to make use of the appropriate standing machinery set up in the stricken countries and to inform the Secretary-General of the type of emergency assistance that they are in a position to offer". My Delegation would hope that such information as the Secretary-General may be able to collect as a result of this paragraph of the draft resolution before us may eventually produce a complete inventory of the financial, personal and physical resources available internationally through national disaster programmes, international agencies as well as funds established by governments for bilateral emergency aid. We would like to suggest, however, that the role of the United Nations should be to support, where appropriate, rather than to coordinate, the work and activities of donor governments and the League of Red Cross Societies in the field of international relief assistance. We consider that the Red Cross, or as the case may be, the Red Crescent, Societies should retain the primary responsibility in mobilizing and coordinating disaster relief assistance. While we can see some merit in the United Nations collating general information about the magnitude and types of relief assistance available from member countries under national programmes, we do not think it would be practical or profitable for the Secretariat to act as a centre of information in individual emergency situations, particularly in the early stage of rescue operations. In our opinion, this task should continue to be performed by the League of Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies, which have both the technical capacity and experience to undertake this phase of relief work.

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