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**"Conclusions and Recommendations of the Inter-American Conference  
on Natural Disaster Reduction"**

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**ABSTRACT**

Disasters are not more than the materialization of certain risk conditions that, in their turn, depend not only on a disturbing or shattering agent --in this case the natural or technological phenomenon-- but on vulnerability conditions that are the facilitating agents that encourage the crisis in the occurrence of the event. These social and environmental conditions are usually the result of applied development styles and of the debt which has been generated with nature due to a gestation or incubation process. In other words, disasters are unsolved problems of development, which need to be analyzed from the point of view of political economy and not only as simple facts of nature explained exclusively in a technocratic way. Vulnerability, in its different forms, is no more than a development deficiency and reflects an environmental negative balance towards which prevention efforts, from the planning point of view, must be directed in order to reduce or avoid the social, economic and environmental consequences.

This is one of the conclusions reached by the representatives of the governments of the Americas, regional and sub-regional organizations, institutions and agencies, from both governmental and non-governmental sectors, professionals, professors and researchers of public and private entities at the "Inter-American Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction", held in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, at the end of March.

The recommendations issued by the participants in the "Cartagena Statement" were the following: the preparation of techniques for monitoring and follow-up of territorial and social accumulation of vulnerabilities; the need for community involvement and their active participation; the undertaking of studies on disasters involving social, technical and scientific aspects and the interaction of civil society with government agencies; the stimulation of educational programs to make prevention part of culture; the formation of networks of institutions and documentation centers; the strengthening of organizational and administrative disaster prevention and assistance systems in the context of decentralization and participation of civil society; the emphasis on prevention rather than on emergency assistance; the need for international organizations to