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## TRAGIC EARTHQUAKE HITS HAITI

As we were going to press with this latest IUGS e-Bulletin, a magnitude 7.0 earthquake struck Haiti, near the city of Port-au-Prince on 12 January 2010 causing immeasurable loss of life and damage to critical infrastructure. As we usher in the year 2010, we are humbly reminded that many tragedies around the world often relate to the dynamic nature of planet Earth. As Earth Scientists, we all well appreciate the need to better understand the causes of natural hazards. It is terrible and unfortunate that events such as earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides and volcanic eruptions continue to impact such significant numbers of people around the world. Our collective efforts through geoscience education, practical field research and innovative studies can help to minimize the risks of natural hazards, reduce human vulnerability and enhance the safety of the global society. On behalf of the many geoscientists represented by the IUGS, we send our heartfelt condolences and sympathies to the many people affected by this recent catastrophe.

The IUGS has maintained a resolution on natural disasters which is outlined as follows

### A RESOLUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNION OF GEOLOGICAL SCIENCES (IUGS)

Whereas major natural disasters heighten awareness of the existence of geological hazards worldwide The International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) recognizes:

1. That earthquakes, on-land landslides, floods, and volcanic eruptions constitute significant potential for natural disasters;
2. That a substantial portion, if not most, of the global human population resides in areas characterized by significant risk of the occurrence of natural disasters;
3. That the tendency of the International Community to concentrate on reaction to natural hazards, rather than on preparation and their mitigation, operates to increase their cost to amounts much greater than that of preparation and mitigation;
4. That the lack of education in and awareness of Geological Sciences worldwide tends to decrease awareness of the possibility of natural disasters and preparation for them and thus exacerbate their human and economic toll when they inevitably occur;

5. That in the aftermath of a natural disaster, widespread knowledge of the geological sciences and of existing technology could assist rescue agencies and civil defense managers to obtain faster understanding of the extent of the damage from the event and how to cope with it;

6. That the reduction of the predictive uncertainty of a natural disaster is the most important issue in natural hazards reduction, but that reduction requires a thorough understanding of the nature of the geological processes giving rise to the disaster.

7. That the reduction of damages by a natural disaster requires a series of actions previous to its occurrence, where the understanding of the geological scenario is essential to a sound and safe planning of human settlements.

#### THE IUGS RECOMMENDS:

1. That systems and procedures be established for early warning, developing public awareness including Geological Science education, regional evacuation routes, and shelters with locations based on appropriate geological information, including maps of existing geological hazards;

2. That comprehensive education in the Geological Sciences, including knowledge of local geological hazards and their risk, become an integral part of education systems at all levels and in all countries;

3. That regional disaster management systems be organized where they do not now exist, and that existing disaster management systems be made more effective, and that these systems take steps effectively to monitor known indicators of all natural disasters;

4. That multidisciplinary and multinational research programs and research networks on Geological hazards and risks be developed to improve the professional and public awareness of and understanding of the phenomena associated with such hazards, and that efforts be increased to develop forecasting capability of such hazards;

5. That international agencies and developed countries should provide economic and technical help to support the above mentioned programs and systems within developing countries with regions characterized by significant risk of the occurrence of natural disasters, in the understanding that any help provided before a disaster occurrence surely will save more lives than if the same help is provided afterwards.

#### THE IUGS RESOLVES:

1. To continue promoting the development and application of scientific expertise and experience in understanding the geological forces at work in the development of all types of natural hazards and the processes involved in their mitigation of natural hazards;

2. To continue sharing this information as freely as possible with other members of the scientific community, government officials, policy makers and planners, the insurance industry, and the public as a whole.