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PAN AMERICAN
HEALTH
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WORLD
HEALTH
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ORGANIZATION OF REGIONAL ASSISTANCE IN THE EVENT OF DISASTERS EXCEEDING
THE OPERATING CAPACITY OF THE AFFECTED COUNTRY

(Submitted by the Government of Peru)

In view of the experience of the cataclysm that occurred on 31 May 1970 in an area of Peru in which an earthquake was followed by mud-slides, causing death and destruction:

The region affected is divided geographically into three areas: the coastal area, the Callejón de Huaylas, and the eastern slope of the Andes or the Callejón de Conchucos.

In the two last-mentioned areas the problem was aggravated by the destruction of all means of communication and transportation; however, it was possible to utilize a few amateur radio operators who served as liaison between the devastated regions and the remainder of the Republic.

Medical and other assistance efforts were initially held up because of lack of suitable transportation, the only service to the Callejón de Huaylas and Conchucos being by means of helicopters.

This was the situation for the first four days for the Callejón de Huaylas but not for the towns, villages and hamlets in the Andes, for which, because of their isolation and difficult topography, medical care supplied by air transport had to be authorized.

This situation gave rise to many medical care, housing, shelter, food, and transportation problems, which exceeded the capacity to provide emergency assistance of the Peruvian Government, which was faced with the urgent and imperative need to satisfy the requirements of more than 500,000 persons in the Andean region alone.

Aware of the misfortune, the countries of the Continent immediately provided generous technical and material assistance and thus helped Peru to bind up its wounds. This assistance, which is in every way invaluable, initially gave rise to an accumulation of medical personnel in the city of Lima. Unable to move to the affected areas, these persons, who had generously come to help, felt frustrated when they found that their assistance was not being used.

Therefore, it is proposed:

To approve the inclusion in the provisional agenda prepared by the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau for the XVIII Pan American Sanitary Conference, XXII Meeting of the Regional Committee of the World Health Organization for the Americas, of the proposal of the Government of Peru requesting that experts in catastrophes (earthquakes, mud-slides, etc.) designated by the Pan American Health Organization study and prepare a proposal for the establishment of an agency capable of dealing with human disasters, in which each country will participate and the contribution of each participating country will be coordinated.