

## **NATURAL DISASTERS: MITIGATION AND PREVENTION**

Examples of disaster-preparedness, prevention and mitigation can be highlighted e.g. in earthquake-prone areas as well as hurricanes, typhoons, cyclones (examples are available from Mexico, Antigua/ Guatemala, Leon/ Nicaragua, Quito/ Ecuador, Cairo/ Egypt, Haiti, Italy and the recent tsunami in South East Asia.

Many historic cities throughout the world are menaced by natural disasters, earthquakes, hurricanes, floods... In August 2004 I witnessed the passage of Hurricane Charlie through Havana.

It was impressive to observe the mobilisation of the inhabitants as well as the preventative and post-hurricane actions undertaken by various parts of the Office of the City Historian.

The Office worked in collaboration with Civil Defence units and with groups of local people.

In co-ordination with the Municipality, the Office supports preventative and remedial work for damages caused by natural disasters.

During the preparations for Charlie, measures were taken at the highest levels to guarantee supplies of drinking water, to install special pumps and to organise a system of cistern lorries to avoid inequality of supply between hotels and local inhabitants. To further water sources were installed to alternately supply tourists and inhabitants.

Both water and electricity are challenges for the future in Old Havana. Both infrastructure and supplies should be improved in order to avoid inappropriate imbalances in supply between tourist areas and local resident districts.

Post-disaster reconstruction rehabilitation work is of utmost importance for planners and building code experts.