



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **2004 WINNER OF THE UNITED NATIONS SASAKAWA AWARD FOR DISASTER REDUCTION**

**Omar Dario Cardona received the award for his global efforts on disaster reduction**

Omar Dario Cardona is a Colombian earthquake engineer known internationally for his pioneering approaches to vulnerability reduction and risk management. He has just been selected by a jury composed of representatives of the five continents as the 2004 winner of the United Nations Sasakawa Award for Disaster Reduction.

“ Since I was a boy in Manizales, where I was born, I realized the special attitudes people had when facing up to phenomena like earthquakes, fires, landslides and volcanic eruptions”, explains Omar Dario Cardona. “The environment and culture where I lived were the reason why, as a young civil engineer, I first committed myself to improving our technical scientific knowledge. Later, I became interested in the integrated study of the socio-economic and institutional foundations of disaster risk management”.

Together with the Award on health given by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Award on environment by the UN Environment programme, the United Nations Sasakawa Award for Disaster Reduction is one of three prestigious prizes established in 1986 by the Nippon Foundation. Every year since 1987, the prize recognizes innovative practices in reducing the risks and vulnerabilities of communities to natural hazards. “ Omar Dario spent most of his life in the field of seismic risk reduction and made a remarkable contribution introducing the concept of structural seismic vulnerability. Like all the other candidates, he has greatly advanced the knowledge and practice of disaster risk reduction”, says Sálvamo Briceño, Director of the Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction.

**For more information, please contact:**

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Two other recipients will receive a Certificate of Distinction: Mr. Walter Hays, from the Global Institute for Energy and Environmental Systems, University of North Carolina at Charlotte (USA) and Mr. Gustavo Wilches-Chaux, from the Corporacion Grupo Vigías Salvando Vidas (Colombia). Both have also pioneered in this field and their work is highly appreciated in educational and community development circles. The Municipality of La Paz, Bolivia and the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) in Fiji are decorated with a Certificate of Merit for their collective efforts in promoting risk reduction. The UN Sasakawa Award crystal trophy and a total amount of US \$50, 000 will be handed over to the laureates at the Award ceremony on 7 October 2004, room 12 at 5.15 pm on the occasion of the tenth session of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction.

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