Disaster Assistance and Disaster Management in the Americas

Disaster Reduction in the Americas: A common purpose for democracy, prosperity and sustainable development

Workshop on "Disaster Assistance and Disaster Management in the Americas"
Organization of American States
Washington, D.C., February 10th, 2009
Acknowledgments

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Recognition of all OAS Permanent Representatives and Alternate Representatives whose commitment and tireless efforts have helped to advance cooperation to the benefit of our most vulnerable communities and the continued development of our nations, and advance the causes of democracy, peace, security and prosperity in the Americas.
PREFACE

On February 10, 2009 the Organization of American States (OAS) hosted the Inter-American Workshop on “Disaster Management and Disaster Mitigation in the Americas” to discuss how to make the Inter-American Natural Disaster Mitigation system work more efficiently. One of the issues discussed during the workshop was the need for a more efficient, well-funded, and better coordinated system within the hemisphere, in order to improve cooperation through current mechanisms in the Americas on Disaster Management and Mitigation. The idea behind this document is to share information and best practices exchanged during the workshop as well as to provide technical expertise and policy guidance to help advance the Inter-American Agenda for Disaster Management and Disaster Mitigation.

In the past year, the western hemisphere has been greatly affected by natural disasters. Economic losses worldwide from natural disasters in 2008 totaled US$200 billion and resulted in more than 220,000 deaths. While in Latin America and the Caribbean one can take comfort in the decrease in the number of deaths due in large measure to better disaster preparedness efforts, there is still great concern about the significant impact of the economic losses on these countries overall economic, social and environmental wellbeing. Consequently, several Permanent Representatives expressed an interest in addressing these issues and in working to improve the Inter-American Natural Disaster Mitigation system, in particular as it relates to natural disaster management and response.

In the Americas today, we understand that vulnerability reduction and risk management are central to sustainable development. Risk management is not a sector or stand-alone theme in our development agendas. It is important to accept therefore that sustainable development will not be achieved unless risk management is properly integrated into all sectors and at all levels of governance. It is everybody’s responsibility: farmers, energy producers and grid operators, highway administrators and concessionaires, water supply and sanitation system operators, tourism developers and operators, natural resource management, park and reserves planners and managers, healthcare providers, municipal planners and local governments. It is everyone’s business.

With the increasing conclusive evidence of the negative impact of human activities on changing climate patterns, today, we know that natural disasters are not that natural
The ever-increasing frequency and magnitude is clearly the result of human impact on natural processes. We continue to build and settle in areas prone to seismic activities and landslides, and in low-lying areas subject to recurring low-pressure systems that spawn cyclones and tropical storms. We inhabit flood pathways, cut down and burn the natural vegetation. We pave over natural drainage systems with asphalt and concrete without compensating for lost drainage capacity. We replace forests with crops and grassland and thus alter aquifer recharge and discharge areas, which exposes soils and change erosion and sedimentation processes with unpredictable changes in the hydrological regimes.

These patterns of behavior have led to increased calls and forced us to respond to disaster recovery and reconstruction assistance, but all too often the rebuilding efforts itself once again leaves the economic and social infrastructure at risk. We need to do more to integrate all the processes. It is therefore encouraging to see that at the level of our humanitarian response, we have increased our efforts in emergency preparedness by developing early warning systems and contingency plans. As a consequence, today, there is no doubt that countries in the Americas are better prepared than before which results in less loss of lives.

At the same time, however, we find ourselves less and less prepared to safeguard livelihoods and keep development on track. Some of our most vulnerable communities, which live in areas far from the capital cities, including indigenous people isolated culturally, socially and economically from our national development plans, are the ones that suffer the most. Also even though less people lose their lives to natural hazard events, an ever increasing number of the populations who survive are left without a secure quality of life and sustainable livelihoods.

There is still much more that can be done to better address disaster related emergencies including working together and responding decisively in the implementation of the various and far-reaching current, instruments and mechanisms on disaster response. We can not delay any further a decision on implementing the Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance. If we all agree on its value, then we should ratify it and designate our respective National Coordinating Authorities. If in spite of its obvious merits, there seems to be some reservations, then, I say to you, let’s have a discussion and amend it as necessary. But, in the mean time, we should work on practical, on-the-ground joint action that can lead to its full implementation. We are already responding individually to the call by sister Member States when emergencies occur. But, we can be more effective and more efficient, by acting jointly.
In addition, even as we strive to improve our Inter-American mechanisms for disaster management, we need to recognize the need to work on disaster risk reduction. We hope that the information shared with us by the experts and specialists from the respective agencies represented at the workshop today will assist us in arriving at a point where we can have the effective implementation of disaster management and risk reduction measures and joint action in the spirit of solidarity to which we are all committed.

Ambassador Albert R. Ramdin
Assistant Secretary General
Organization of American States
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OPENING REMARKS

Ambassador Albert Ramdin, Assistant Secretary General

Ambassador Osmar Chohfi, Chair of the Permanent Council,
Ambassador Gustavo Alvin, Chair of Hemispheric Security Committee,
Distinguished Permanent Representatives,
Distinguished Representatives of the observer States,
Experts and Representatives from partner institutions,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me first share with you how pleased I am for this opportunity to plant the seed of renewal for the Inter-American natural disaster mitigation system.

As you know, for the last few years, across the world, we have witnessed the significant impact of natural phenomena such as hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, droughts, landslides, and volcanic eruptions.

Last year (2008) proved to be one of the most devastating years on record. Throughout the world, more than 220,000 people died as a result of natural disasters and overall economic losses totaled US$ 200 billion. Latin America and the Caribbean suffered six major tropical cyclones (Dolly, Eduard, Fay, Gustav, Hanna, and Ike) resulting in more than 1,000 deaths and more than US$ 50 billion in material losses. Recently, Costa Rica was hit by a significant earthquake and countries such as Haiti, Bolivia and Brazil have had their share of catastrophic floods.

In the face of these realities, several Permanent Representatives expressed interest in making the Inter-American Natural Disaster Mitigation system work more efficiently, in particular the areas of natural disaster management and response. Whether at the Permanent Council or in private meetings, the message was clear, a more efficient, well-funded, better coordinated system is needed. This was what drove me to propose this workshop as an opportunity to explore ways of moving forward and delivering improved services to the peoples of the Americas.

I would like to thank the OAS Permanent Representatives and the experts from partner institutions who support tirelessly the work of General Secretariat in the area of
disaster mitigation. The conclusions from today’s workshop, the synergies that will stem from our dialogue, and the creative solutions that will have been identified will hopefully assist the Inter-American System in streamlining disaster management and response.

Let me point out that we are not short of mechanisms. In fact, all the pillars of the system are in place. The requisite procedures have been defined, the division of labor among the major institutions is already set, and a monitoring and steering joint body shoulders the responsibility of its proper functioning and effectiveness. From the establishment of the Inter-American Emergency Aid Fund (FONDEM) in 1965 to the establishment of the Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR) in 1999 and through the adoption of the Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance in 1991, the hemispheric natural disaster platform, as part of the global platform, has shown the potential to support effectively the OAS member states in dealing with the issue of natural disasters.

Now, if the Inter-American System already has the vehicle in place and it is in running order, why does it seem to be out of gas? Why is it that only three member states have ratified the Convention? Why are the resources of the FONDEM so anemic? I regret that since the establishment of the Fund, no contribution has ever been received, leaving the Secretariat with the challenge of sourcing funds to support countries affected by natural disaster. The sourcing of funds in cases of emergency is enormously difficult. In addition, why has the IANCDR not been able to meet on a regular basis and why does it not have the funds provided for in its statutes? These are questions that together with the experts and representatives of member states we will explore and attempt to answer today.

From the point of view of the General Secretariat, political commitment, proper staffing and resources are all key in order for the system to work. However, if the member states renew their political commitment, if the Inter-American agencies pool their resources, and synchronize their actions, I believe we will be in a better position to alleviate the suffering of disaster victims throughout the Americas. At the same time, we will be better able to support the efforts of entities working on the issues at a sub-regional level such as the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA), the Centro de Coordinación de la Prevención de Desastres Naturales en América Central (CPREDENAC), and the Comité Andino para la Prevención y Atención de Desastres (CAPRADE).
While we focus on disaster management and response, I would be remiss not to stress the efforts being made in the areas of prevention, vulnerability reduction and risk management. In fact, policy makers across our hemisphere are more and more aware of the usefulness of tools such as building codes and land use norms. The Inter-American Strategic Plan for Policy on Vulnerability Reduction, Risk Management and Disaster Response (IASP), adopted in 2003, epitomizes the political will to prevent and mitigate the consequences and implications of natural phenomena.

In the same vein, I would like to mention the Inter-American Network for Natural Disaster Mitigation (INDM), which links all the national disaster mitigation agencies of the Americas for information sharing, coordination and mutual support.

The OAS understands that much of the responsibility for disaster response and management falls under disaster or humanitarian agencies. Nonetheless, as the premier regional political organization, acting in the context of the Inter-American System, the OAS needs to show sensitivity and leadership in emergency situations. However symbolic, FONDEM plays a major political support role and the resources it provides often allow for other Inter-American partners to leverage funds from the private sector to provide rapid assistance to disaster victims.

As regarding the serious financial anemia which has always weakened the FONDEM, we need also to examine how best we can arrive at creative ways to fund it and make it work efficiently.

In closing, I want to thank Ambassador Chohfi, Ambassador Alvin, Ambassador Sosa Cuello and Ambassador Ospina for their unwavering support in addressing the issue of natural disaster mitigation. I trust that the conclusions of this seminar will shed more light on the way ahead for a more satisfactory functioning of our system.
Among the array of services provided by the various institutions of the Inter-American system, natural disaster assistance and risk management are among those most likely to have a direct, positive impact on the lives of the people of the Hemisphere.

While it is true that the number of people affected by disasters and the total amount of economic losses has risen, it is also true that the number of fatalities has dropped, largely because of improved conditions for natural disaster preparation, mitigation, and response.

The Inter-American system has access to diverse tools to help both in the risk preparation and mitigation phase and in the recovery and reconstruction phase. For example, we have institutions on the scale of the Pan American Health Organization and the Inter-American Development Bank. We are equipped with a legal framework to facilitate lending and the receipt of aid, in particular the Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance. The significant contribution made by civil society is yet another factor that increases the natural disaster mitigation capacity of the Inter-American system.

To ensure the efficient use of all this potential, we must find joint solutions to challenges that can undermine the results of aid initiatives. Matters such as climate change, the productive environment and economic and social development of the member states, the urban and rural land ownership situation, and the low number of ratifications of the Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance complicate the issue of humanitarian aid in the region. In this regard, I would like to emphasize the pivotal, essential role of coordination among the different aid agencies. Special attention must be given to improving coordination among mechanisms for natural disaster prevention, risk reduction, mitigation, and response at the national, regional, and global levels.

In this context, the OAS, through its different areas (Executive Secretariat for Integral Development, the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Inter-American Committee for Natural Disaster Reduction) has a key role to play in coordinating aid initiatives. The interconnectedness of the network of the Organization’s 28 offices in the member states, for example, can speed up the provision of aid and the identification of specific requests.
Initiatives like this workshop afford an opportunity to understand the challenges and seek joint solutions. The information provided by the experts from international organizations represented here, along with the contributions of delegations, will help us make progress toward implementation of an efficient Inter-American strategy for natural disaster mitigation.

Thank You.

PRESENTATIONS BY EXPERT PANELISTS

Pablo Gonzalez, Chief, Risk Management –RISK-MACC within the context of Climate Change Adaptation, Coordinator for Central America - Department of Sustainable Development (DSD)

The presentation, based on the background document prepared for the workshop, provided an overview of the existing instruments and mechanisms for Disaster Management and Disaster Mitigation within the Inter-American System, as established through the OAS General Assembly. It also described the activities implemented by the Department of Sustainable Development of the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development in support of the mandates that emanate from the OAS General Assembly. More particularly, the activities carried out in support of the implementation of the Inter-American Strategic Plan for Policy on Vulnerability Reduction, Risk Management and Disaster Response (IASP) and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR) Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas.

The aim of the presentation was to provide the basis for discussion and to review the effectiveness and performance of existing mechanisms and instruments, identify pitfalls and challenges for advancing their implementation on the ground, and identify opportunities for further advancing synergies and horizontal cooperation among OAS Member States for reducing risks to natural disasters and mitigate the adverse impacts of natural disasters through coordinated and cooperative Inter-American action.

In describing the existing instruments and mechanisms, a clear “evolution” from Disaster Response and Assistance towards Disaster Risk Reduction was noted. Graph #1 shows some critical milestones in that evolution. However, it was also evident that while instruments and mechanisms shifted the attention towards Disaster Risk Re-
duction, most of the progress observed in the region was in Disaster Management. Recent events, such as hurricane Dean, in 2007; the Poas Volcano Earthquake in Costa Rica early in 2009; and the multiple-events triggered during hurricane and rainy seasons in 2008 & 2009, prove that the Americas is better prepared to deal with disasters. In the mean time, economic losses, the number of people affected and interruption to businesses, education and health services continue to rise showing that there is still much to do in terms of vulnerability reduction.

The Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR), established on June 7th, 1999, through the OAS General Assembly resolution AG/Res.1682 (XXIX-0/99), represents a milestone in moving from response and assistance towards disaster risk reduction. As the “principal forum at the OAS for matters related to natural disasters,” IACNDR provides the OAS Permanent Council with “strategic thinking, recommendations on initiatives related to natural disasters, and advice on methods of financing them, paying special attention to policies and programs designed to reduce the vulnerabilities of member States to natural disasters.” Nevertheless, much needs to be done in concrete on-the-ground inter-agency collaboration to implement the policy decisions of the IACNDR.

The Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation (INDM), established by AG/Res. 2314, in June of 2007, as per the recommendations of the first Inter-American Meeting of Ministers and High Authorities of Sustainable Development in December 2006 in Santa Cruz de la Sierra offers a unique opportunity to support the decisions of the IACNDR and advance practical collaboration among OAS Member States in matters of disaster risk reduction. The XXXVII General Assembly convened in Panama assigned a unique position to the INDM “…as the permanent hemispheric mechanism for strengthening practical cooperation among intergovernmental agencies in the area of disaster reduction, especially by sharing technical information and best practices.” AG/Res. 2314 further recognizes the need to coordinate efforts with relevant agencies of the United Nations System in order to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held in Kobe, Japan, in January, 2005.

Back to Disaster Management; the Inter-American Emergency Aid Fund (FONDEM,) originally established in 1965 at the Second Special Inter-American Conference of the OAS “to provide available social, humanitarian, material, technical, and financial aid to any member state of the Organization that is threatened by, has suffered from, or is in an emergency situation caused by natural disasters” was also discussed. While the primary objective of FONDEM remains to support the political role of the OAS in matters pertaining to emergency aid, and to demonstrate the solidarity of the member
Coordinating Authority. Hence, AG/Res. 2184 (XXXVI-O/06) and AG/Res. 2314 (XXXVII O/07) “invite those member states that have not already done so to give consideration to signing and/or ratifying the Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance, as the case may be, and to adopt the measures necessary for its effective implementation,” and “urge the states parties to the Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance to designate a National Coordinating Authority pursuant to the terms of the Convention and to notify the General Secretariat of that designation”. AG/Res. 2314 further suggests to “consider the functions of the National Operational Focal Points of the INDM,” in naming the National Coordinating Authority to the Convention.

OAS Member States have understood the need to increase investments in vulnerability reduction as opposed to increasingly shifting financial resources –originally allocated to development programs, towards humanitarian assistance, response, recovery and reconstruction. Furthermore, reducing vulnerability and increasing resilience of the social and economic infrastructure is soundly and widely understood as an investment and not a cost. But something else needs to be considered. And that is, even though significant progress has been made in disaster preparedness and response, the increasing number of disasters and their more and more devastating effects may soon reverse the equation resulting in also increasing losses in human lives and personal belongings. Consequently, investing in vulnerability reduction and risk management is also investing in Disaster Management. Disaster Management and Disaster Mitigation imply very distinctive and different set of measures and policies. Hence, they are closely dependent on each other, and both equally important for disaster risk reduction.

The Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance has no precedent in any other region of the World, and places the Americas at the vanguard in collective Disaster Management. More than 18 years have passed since its adoption, and only three Member States have ratified it. It is then time to move decisively towards its implementation by taking some small steps, while those remaining 31 Member States review the Convention before they can ratify it, proposing and agreeing in amendments or ratifying it as it is. And the first small step that can already be taken is the designation of the National Coordinating Authority for each OAS Member State. This will allow for the development of concrete experience and trust for more collective and coherent Humanitarian Assistance within the Americas. Member States have shown their solidarity over the years, responding to the call for assistance from neighbor countries on the basis of bilateral ad-hoc agreements. The designation of
states, OAS Member States have recently and repeatedly requested to better utilize the fund for more effective assistance. Still, FONDEM has not received any voluntary contribution since its creation; and contributions made over the years since its creation were drawn exclusively from OAS regular funds. It was noted that FONDEM contributions have represented only about 0.33% of total financial assistance during 2006 and 2007, suggesting that a revision of its statutes and its utilization is required in order to use more effectively the scarce resources. Furthermore, it was suggested that perhaps the fund should be refocused towards assisting affected countries with the formulation of mitigation measures, learning from the observed impacts, rather than providing small amounts of cash. The table below shows FONDEM and other Organizations Disbursements for 2006 and 2007 (in US$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FONDEM</td>
<td>160,000.00</td>
<td>50,000.00</td>
<td>210,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PADF</td>
<td>282,825.00</td>
<td>28,477.00</td>
<td>311,302.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BID</td>
<td>3,447,502.00</td>
<td>447,500.00</td>
<td>3,895,002.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CERF</td>
<td>26,009,078.00</td>
<td>2,220,939.00</td>
<td>28,230,017.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFRC</td>
<td>15,189,739.00</td>
<td>15,968,606.00</td>
<td>31,158,345.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>45,091,151.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>18,717,528.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>63,804,666.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table does not include other sources of financial assistance that might have been deployed in response to the event of 2006 and 2007.

In 1977, the Secretary General of the OAS signed an agreement with the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator concerning the coordination of disaster relief in the Americas. Under that agreement the Representative of the Office of the Secretary General of the OAS, in a member state stricken by a disaster, would be instructed to establish contact with the Resident Representative of the UN Development Program (UNDP), so as to ensure that FONDEM would be associated with the assessment of disaster relief assistance requirements. It was then recommended to re-establish this mechanism in support of a closer coordination between the UN System relief efforts and the FONDEM, and for capitalizing on the OAS installed capacity in its Member States.

It was noted that, as of today, the Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance has not been implemented; and no OAS Member State has designated their National Coordinating Authority. Hence, AG/Res. 2184 (XXXVI-O/06) and AG/Res. 2314 (XXXVII O/07) “invite those member states that have not already done so to give consideration to signing and/or ratifying the Inter-American Convention to Fa-
cilitate Disaster Assistance, as the case may be, and to adopt the measures necessary for its effective implementation,” and “urge the states parties to the Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance to designate a National Coordinating Authority pursuant to the terms of the Convention and to notify the General Secretariat of that designation”. AG/Res. 2314 further suggests to “consider the functions of the National Operational Focal Points of the INDM,” in naming the National Coordinating Authority to the Convention.

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The Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance has no precedent in any other region of the World, and places the Americas at the vanguard in collective Disaster Management. More than 18 years have passed since its adoption, and only three Member States have ratified it. It is then time to move decisively towards its implementation by taking some small steps, while those remaining 31 Member States review the Convention before they can ratify it, proposing and agreeing in amendments or ratifying it as it is. And the first small step that can already be taken is the designation of the National Coordinating Authority for each OAS Member State. This will allow for the development of concrete experience and trust for more collective and coherent Humanitarian Assistance within the Americas. Member States have shown their solidarity over the years, responding to the call for assistance from neighbor countries on the basis of bilateral ad-hoc agreements. The designation of the National Coordinating Authority to the Convention would facilitate joint response and result in a more effective and efficient use of expertise, knowledge and available resources throughout OAS Member States.
Graph #1. Milestones in the evolution from Disaster Response and Assistance towards Disaster Risk Reduction

Evolution in the Americas

- Inter-American Emergency Aid Fund (FCON2H1)
  - Signed at the Second Special Session of the Inter-American Committee on the OAS
  - 1965

- Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance
  - Signed at Guatemala City, July 1, 1991
  - 1991

- Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction (ACNDR)
  - 1992

- Inter-American Strategic Plan for Policy on Vulnerability Reduction, Risk Management, and Disaster Response (IASP)
  - 2001

- Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation (NIDM)
  - 2007
Graph #2. The Roadmap towards Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)
The Inter-American system has progressed in several aspects, although a lot remains to be achieved.

Countries have developed risk reduction and response mechanisms and procedures that are frequently underutilized because generally too little knowledge is shared between neighbor countries. A similar situation exists for the intergovernmental mechanism that exists in the three sub regions.

PAHO, on behalf of the system and as part of the IACNDR, has been coordinating the disaster preparedness and response group. This has entailed a number of activities from simulation exercises with permanent missions to the OAS in Washington D.C. to training and response coordination meetings that are taking place immediately after each disaster. A special information system (called LSS/SUMA) which compiles all data related to humanitarian supplies has been developed and made available to all member countries. A portal is being developed between PAHO and OAS specialists to make info more readily available. A physical space, the Emergency Operating Center, is in the process of being built in the PAHO facilities to, among other duties, facilitate the access to information by permanent missions in Washington D.C..

It is suggested that a special working group session take place before the hurricane season to brief the Ambassador on new developments in the existing response mechanism part of the Inter-American system.

In the area of risk reduction, Latin American and Caribbean states proposed, in 2004, that “safe hospitals” be adopted as an objective for the region. That same recommendation has been made by 168 countries in the Hyogo Conference where the Hyogo- ISDR framework was approved. In addition, ISDR has promoted the Safe Hospital Campaign, which will end in December 2009, as a multi-sector effort to reduce risks in a critical facility. The objective is to concentrate efforts in “safe hospitals” in order to galvanize experts and institutions from all sectors in the progress of at least one type of facility.

It is recommended that the Inter-American system look at ways to publicize success stories and participate in the World Health Day (April 7th) and the ISDR day (October 14th). More information is available at www.paho.org/disasters
The Safe Hospital Initiative aims to ensure that all new facilities are built in such a way that they will remain functioning after a disaster— at the moment in which they are particularly needed.

Cassandra Rogers, Inter-American Development Bank

From Disaster Response to Disaster Prevention: The IDB Experience

Results of the IDB Indicators of Disaster Risk and Risk Management Program show that the majority of IDB member countries do not have the economic resources to finance reconstruction. The increasing gap to finance disaster losses makes traditional focus on emergency response and recovery unsustainable.

In 2004, the IDB conducted an evaluation of its policy and operational practice related to natural and unexpected disasters. Among the key findings and conclusions were:

- While there was increasing awareness and some progress in disaster risk management in the Region, countries are not sufficiently addressing the risk which disasters pose to development.

- Governments seldom have a well established financing plan for contingent disaster liability.

- While the Bank devoted resources before, during and after a disaster, through prevention, emergency response and rehabilitation/reconstruction, its response was found to be largely reactive rather than proactive. Further, its policy and operational practice did not sufficiently stress the integrated approach to disaster risk management that is now an acknowledged prerequisite for effective disaster risk management.

In 2005 to 2007, the IDB approved a new Disaster Risk Management Policy and Action Plan (Action Plan for Improving Disaster Risk Management 2005-2008), which promotes a more proactive, comprehensive approach, and includes both pre-disaster risk reduction as well as post-disaster recovery. Such an integrated disaster risk management approach (IDRM) involved the following set of policy elements: risk analysis; risk reduction (prevention and mitigation); financial protection and risk transfer; emergency preparedness and response; and post-disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction.
The Policy emphasizes ex ante risk management and has two objectives:

- To support countries in systematic risk reduction through risk identification, vulnerability reduction, prevention and mitigation; and
- To facilitate rapid and appropriate disaster response and to avoid rebuilding vulnerability.

In order to better manage disaster risk related to its programming and project work, and the Bank’s response to disasters, the Bank:

- Includes a discussion on proactive disaster risk management in the dialogue agenda with high-risk countries. Specifically, it identifies disaster risk as a major development challenge; recommends the use of its non-reimbursable resources to finance country risk evaluation, for discussion with country authorities; and promotes prevention in country programming and country strategy preparation;
- Requires that Bank-financed public and private sector projects include the necessary measures to reduce disaster risk to acceptable levels;
- Provides non-reimbursable financing for disaster prevention (Disaster Prevention Fund ($US10 million) and the Multi Donor Disaster Prevention Trust Fund (US$ 8 million)). Priority areas: risk analysis; preparation of prevention and mitigation plans, including design of priority works; integrated disaster risk management plans; institutional strengthening; design of mechanisms for risk retention and transfer;
- Promotes lending programs which improve risk management by combining the reduction of risk with the ex-ante financing of residual risk. i.e. Prevention and mitigation investments combined budgetary support; contingent credit, insurance; and
- Provides non-reimbursable emergency technical cooperation of up to US$200,000 per event for humanitarian assistance.

Accordingly, consistent with the comments of President Alberto Moreno delivered at the first meeting of the IACNDR in September 2007, we recommend the following:

- Promote disaster prevention as an investment in development;
- Promote integrated disaster risk management, emphasizing ex ante risk management;
- Support collaboration and inter-agency coordination under the IACNDR framework;
- Continue policy dialogue in integrated disaster risk management.
In June 2009, the Bank’s Sustainable Energy, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management Network will host a Regional Policy Dialogue on Integrating Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management in Development Policy and Planning.

Santiago Borrero, Secretary General of the Pan American Institute of Geography and History

The 2010 - 2020 Agenda of the PAIGH and the Pan-American Laboratory for Observation of Natural Disasters

In this brief presentation, on behalf of the PAIGH and as a member of the Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR), I will make reference to two relevant institutional activities, namely the 2010 - 2020 Agenda of the PAIGH and the Pan-American Laboratory for Observation of Natural Disasters.

PAIGH: Background

As participants in this workshop may not be familiar with the PAIGH, I start by recalling that the Institute is a non-profit organization operating with annual quotas contributed by Member States. PAIGH has no bureaucracy and functions in a decentralized manner. Given the reduced operational and administrative costs, PAIGH constitutes an efficient alternative for partnership in the Americas.

Established in 1928, the PAIGH is the oldest specialized agency of the Organization of American States and a unique organization in the region, combining geography and history. Its headquarters and main facilities are based in Mexico City. The PAIGH Assembly consists of Member States delegations; each one entitled to one vote, currently 21. Each Member State has a PAIGH National Section, responsible for the scientific and professional operations of the Institute. The PAIGH is technically organized around four Commissions: Cartography (established in 1941), Geography (1946), History (1946) and Geophysics (1969). These commissions are in charge of developing and executing the scientific programs of the PAIGH. Commissions meet every two years; the most recent meeting took place in Itu, Brazil in 2007. PAIGH’s Directing Council meets annually, and its next meeting will take place in Quito, Ecuador 26-30 October 2009.

In essence, the PAIGH’s mission is to promote and coordinate scientific and technical
development, research, studies and training in cartography, geography, geophysics and history in the Americas; and consistently, to stimulate cooperation among specialized institutions and specialists from the Americas and international organizations in the fields of main activity. Currently, PAIGH is adapting to change and looking for greater relevance, in scientific development, related decision making and improved understanding of the peoples in the Americas, in the context of the spatial and historical dimensions and as part of the Inter-American System.

In particular, the Commission of Cartography (based at present in Chile) has standing committees, mainly dealing with the building of the regional spatial data infrastructure and the associated institutional strengthening. With priority, PAIGH is trying to (i) incorporate a new generation of Geographic Information (GI) specialists; (ii) to implement capacity building activities involving the institutions in charge of basic and thematic GI production and analysis and (iii) to promote technical cooperation projects of a multidisciplinary nature, with precedence in the areas of hazards and disasters.

**The 2010 - 2020 Pan-American Agenda of the PAIGH**

The aim of the Agenda is to allow the Institute to undertake efficiently the challenges of the organization in the 21st century and drive a renewed vision of the Pan American ideal. The Agenda will consist of achievable goals based on an analysis of the trends in the sciences connected to the PAIGH. It will identify specific action areas and projects that will facilitate and stimulate its implementation, with the goal of promoting contributions by the PAIGH to the development of Pan Americanism. As issued at the 41st Directing Council Meeting (El Salvador, 2008) the Agenda focuses on the following goals:

- Consolidation of the PAIGH as a Pan American regional forum or the integral development of the Member States by strengthening necessary infrastructure, scientific networks and institutional ties.
- Articulation of institutional competencies that contribute to regional integration in specific fields such as climate change, territorial organization and natural disasters.
- Fostering development of spatial databases to assist with decision making processes and especially to make early warning systems more efficient and improve disaster response systems.
- Assist with the development of quality information required to analyze processes connected to specific fields such as soil degradation, impacts on
biodiversity, occupancy of coastal lands, contamination, forest fires, identification and occupancy of risk zones (including adjacent international areas) and the depletion of natural resources, particularly mineral resources.

- Promotion of innovative variants for the study of Pan American history, in fields such as environmental history.

The Pan-American Laboratory for Observation of Natural Disasters

In the framework of the Agenda, one of the first and key instruments is the establishment of the Pan-American Laboratory for Observation of Natural Disasters. The Laboratory is the logical consequence of the work advanced to reshape the institution since the 18th PAIGH General Assembly (Caracas, 2005); the Technical Meetings held in Itu, Brazil in 2007; the number and the institutional impact of the PAIGH technical assistance projects sponsored in the fields of natural disasters and the building of the regional spatial data infrastructure, which are at the core of PAIGH’s annual technical assistance program. In addition since 2007, the GeoSur Program coordinating in conjunction with CAF, the EDC/USGS and IABIN, aimed to implement an effective inter-institutional mechanism for distributing and promoting the use of geospatial data to aid in decision making and policy development in South America; and in particular the results of the capacity building project “Detection and Follow–up of Forest Fires in Mexico and Central America” implemented by Mexico’s Meteorological Service SMN. In sum, all these activities explain the growing relevance of the disasters area for the PAIGH, as part of the Inter-American System coordinated by the OAS.

The Creation of the Pan American Laboratory for the Observation of Natural Disasters was approved at the 41st Directing Council Meeting (El Salvador, 2008), considering the need to prioritize the subject of “Prevention, Response and Mitigation of the Effects Caused by Natural Disasters”, consistent with the scientific work plans that arise from the recommendations of the “2010 – 2020 Pan American Agenda”.

To inaugurate the Center, a two-day “International Workshop on Natural Hazards and Disasters and Sustainable Development in the Americas” is presently being planned to gather the specialized community throughout the Americas, focusing on the hazards facing the region and the changing concept of vulnerability and risk. The Laboratory, located at the General Secretariat main facilities in Mexico City as a Center for regional innovation and relevance will advance its activities following a multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary scientific approach with a
strong focus on capacity building, internships and networking. It is based initially on a five year work plan oriented mainly to the implementation of value added activities to the field in the region for which it will be fundamental to avoid duplications, improve coordination and cooperation with the organizations working in the field as part of the Inter-American System, led by OAS SEDI.

Christine Herridge, Director of Disaster Management, PADF

Public Private Partnerships for Disaster Preparedness, Mitigation, Management and Risk Reduction

**PADF:**

In summary, PADF began in 1962 and is affiliated with the Organization of the American States (OAS). PADF has a close working relationship with the private sector institutionally, as the anchor of the organization, comprising the Board of Trustees; and programmatically, through private sector sponsorship and involvement in projects and initiatives throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

**In-Kind Donations Program (IKD):**

PADF is well known for its In-Kind Donations program which solicits and receives in-kind donations of tools, health equipment, food, furniture and other urgently requested items to assist communities in recovering from devastating disasters. PADF has developed a strong network of sources in the United States and partners with the OAS and local organizations to ensure the donations are received by those in need in the affected countries.

**The Disaster Management Alliance (DMA):**

In 2000, the Association of American Chambers of Commerce of Latin America (AACCLA) signed a Disaster Response Memorandum of Understanding with PADF. One of the results was the PADF/AACCLA partnership to implement the OFDA/USAID-sponsored Disaster Management Alliance Project which began in 2004. Its main goal is to facilitate the integration of the private sector into disaster prepar-
edness, mitigation, response, and recovery. All of the participating countries such as El Salvador, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Colombia, Trinidad & Tobago, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Haiti (in this order) are among the world's most at risk to multiple hazards. Source: reference material from the 2005 World Bank report - Natural Disaster Hotspots: A Global Risk Analysis.

To date some of the most important achievements include:

- Activities in 9 countries;
- Leveraged $2,540,363 in private and public sector contributions with the initial seed capital of $302,877 from the project;
- Delivered 44 high-impact risk reduction projects that helped more than 343,894 people in 154 communities;
- Trained 1,700 government and private sector professionals and 741 community leaders in risk mitigation;
- Established effective working relationships and leveraged resources between authorities and the private sector organizations in the region.

The new phase of the DMA, which began October 1, facilitates the components needed for the Alliance to become a regional reality which strengthens national capacity through partnerships for continuity, corporate mentoring, strategic investment planning, and access to information, contacts, training, corporate recruitment, Alliance development materials, and technical assistance.

Based on this successful model, OFDA sponsors its adaptation and implementation in China and plans to expand further into both India and Indonesia. The Office of Development Partners (ODP) of USAID's Global Development Alliance (GDA) is supporting PADF's current phase by contributing resources, technical assistance, and global corporate partners.

**The Disaster Management and Emergency Response Program (DMERP):**

For most of its 45-year history, PADF has been responding to and helping to mitigate natural disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean as the official disaster relief arm of the Organization of American States (OAS). PADF's affiliation with the OAS and other contacts enables rapid assessment of the situation after an event, and secures discounted storage and shipping, and duty-free entry of goods into the target country. In recent years, PADF has increased its efforts to respond to natural disasters and reached out to the private sector to garner additional support for relief and
recovery programs.
The DMERP was created to facilitate rapid response to crises in the hemisphere by removing as many obstacles as possible prior to an event:

- Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) created as joint effort so PADF and partners work together smoothly.
- Key contact identification (PR, in-country representatives, etc.) to facilitate related items such as recognition ceremonies.
- Partners allocate and transfer funds before the disaster, significantly decreasing response time such as bank holding periods, approvals, and other logistics are cleared in advance.
- Relief packages are purchased and stored in Miami for immediate deployment after a disaster.

At the end of the year, leftover funds can be used for disaster recovery and mitigation projects such as agricultural recovery initiatives.

Just this past year PADF has responded to disasters in Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Panama, the Turks and Caicos. Impacts ranged from floods and hurricanes to earthquakes. We are very grateful to the OAS offices for their fine efforts to facilitate the response!

Those attending the OAS Summit of the Americas in T&T will be invited to a DMERP luncheon offered by PADF to hear more about the DMERP.

Considerations:

In addition to highlighting PADF’s programming we would like to emphasize the importance of private sector integration. Over the last 40 years the development paradigm has changed from 80% of the resources coming primarily from governments to 80% of development being done by the private sector. The exposure to economic losses, and worse, by the private sector is high with at least 60% of companies hit by a major disaster going out of business.

The private sector wants to help. It often doesn’t know how. That is the gap that organizations like PADF are able to bridge by facilitating effective working relationships across sectors and disciplines.

The private sector also wants to know where there is significant investment and the potential to make a valuable, sustainable contribution. Collaboration by funding
sources such as IDB should be assessed in a multi-sector, multi-disciplinary forum to determine remaining gaps which the private sector’s collaboration can address. Hopefully this type of discussion will be possible during the proposed hemispheric session in Panama this March.

In closing, one could advocate that the private sector has the lion’s share of resources AND potential economic losses. Its resilience or lack thereof, influences the security, well-being and development of our countries, regions and hemisphere. Thus it is a critical stakeholder which must be represented in these efforts. PADF helps build relationships for effective public/private partnerships that enable effective use of the resources, capacities and tools available.

The Ambassadors will be invited to a luncheon to kick off the Summit of the Americas. It will be an opportunity to hear more about the program. PADF and its private sector partners welcome the valuable comments from the diplomatic community on the formation of productive public/private partnerships for our Disaster Management and Emergency Response Program (DMERP).

*How to Get Involved:*

Please direct your questions to the directors of each program of interest:

DMA: Christine Herridge, Disaster Management Director, Tel.: (202) 458-6181, cher-ridge@padf.org

DMERP: Paul Fisher, Director Corporate Relations and Development, Tel: (202) 458-6338, pfisher@padf.org

IKD: Pilar Heraud, Director In-Kind Donations, Tel. (202) 458-6155, pheraud@padf.org
Governor Scott McCallum, President and CEO of the Aidmatrix Foundation

- Aidmatrix Foundation Background: Aidmatrix Foundation is the largest information technology non-profit globally which transact $1.5 billion US annually in product to 35,000 organizations on 6 continents.

- Responding to OAS needs, the information system empowers OAS officials and organizations to mobilize – to effectively provide logistics. This strengthens response to disaster. It reduces the “secondary disaster” of unneeded product and volunteers glutting the system and it strengthens the preparedness and readiness for disaster through creating a stronger local community infrastructure. The system can be used (and is used) to connect product, volunteers and cash and it can be used for tracking and warehousing. It can also be used to share information such as best practices in social networking.

- US Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff, on the Today Show, said that” Aidmatrix solutions were taking FEMA into the 21st Century.”

- Aidmatrix systems are used by organizations and countries worldwide. It is the official disaster network for US and FEMA and 34 US States, NATO, Romania, Honduras, India. It is used by organizations in Bolivia, Haiti, Mexico, and Puerto Rico. Most charitable food goes through Aidmatrix in the US, and connects food to the hungry in Canada, Latin America, Europe, and Africa. Organizations such as the American Red Cross, World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, Feeding America, Salvation Army, and many others use Aidmatrix as their system.

- The system is controlled by the organization using it – it is your system designed by your team with Aidmatrix support. It is customized for your needs.

- As a non-profit, the Aidmatrix Foundation is able to donate and provide financing to cover a substantial portion of the overall cost. Companies such as Sun Microsystems, Accenture, UPS, Motorola, i2 Technologies, and others have donated basic technology to Aidmatrix to be used for humanitarian purposes.
For over 40 years the countries of the Americas have put in place collective actions for preparedness, response and financial support for natural hazard events, structured first through the Inter-American System and then in regions beginning in the Caribbean, followed by Central America and the Andean Countries. This legacy led to a strengthening of humanitarian assistance capacity at different levels than exists today, but has also led to a predominant focus on emergency management over that of vulnerability reduction of economic and social infrastructure and associated populations. Through these years international financing institutions (IFI), bilateral assistance agencies, international humanitarian assistance and community development agencies, the private sector, universities and research institutions, together with the UN and Inter-American systems, have underwritten, made loans, initiated, and led efforts in disaster management and risk reduction.

Since the 1980’s, individually and as regions, the countries of the hemisphere have taken note of the ever more apparent disaster-development linkages, and out of that reflection has come a growing discussion on the underlying causes of vulnerability and the need to reduce physical, financial and economic risk. In 2003, the Member States of the OAS adopted the Inter-American Strategic Plan for Policy on Vulnerability Reduction, Risk Management and Disaster Response (IASP), which brought together the more than 30 acquired commitments of the countries to act on disaster assistance and disaster management in the Americas.

The countries have less than effectively used mechanisms and instruments which they have created in concert with the international development and humanitarian assistance agencies, NGOs and the private sector.

Out of this experience and with the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) Expected Outcome as a backdrop, but with gaps in specific qualitative and quantitative data, the following disaster risk reduction trends in the countries throughout the hemisphere have emerged:

- Lessening of the loss of life due to natural hazard events,
- Increasing declared economic losses, and
- Increasing affected population and communities.
The countries and regional organizations, recognizing and reporting on their disaster losses and emergency management and risk reduction efforts, are part of emerging trends in disaster risk reduction implementation, as are their traditional inter-governmental, NGO and private sector partners. These trends in implementation are:

- A shift in policy and program focus to risk reduction of economic and social infrastructure and associated populations through development actions. These discussions are arduous, on-going, not completed in all countries, and involve changes from priorities in capacity building to constitutional reform. These discussions are also taking place in inter-government agencies, IFIs, bilateral aid agencies, NGOs and the private sector. It goes beyond thinking about “mainstreaming disaster risk reduction” in development to unpacking natural hazard risk (identification and taking mitigation action) through sector development. No longer should development generate vulnerability nor fail to address existing risk issues.

- At the same time a working towards greater coordination, collaboration and cooperation in emergency preparedness and response to bring the anticipated needed resources to bear. Increased exposure of populations to hazards and economic losses means greater need in the short term for anticipating needs, preparing to respond, recovery and rehabilitation. Policy and mechanisms are in place, but countries must implement what they have adopted, and prioritize and coordinate their actions. FONDEM, the Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance, REDLAC, IACNDR and other mechanisms must be used by the countries in a more coherent and concerted manner.

- A need for more efficient, shared programming and reporting by all actors. There is a felt and expressed need by countries, inter-governmental organizations and specialized agencies, IFIs, bilaterals, NGOs and the private sector alike for more efficient and coherent programming of disaster risk reduction efforts, and their accompanying monitoring, reporting, and evaluation. The issue is not one of common forms but of common purpose measured against the HFA Expected Outcome, and shared data to highlight trends, achievements, gaps, challenges, and opportunities in the future. The countries have created INDM to take the lead and regional inter-governmental agencies to carry out meaningful implementation.

The trends and associated achievements to date bring to light present gaps, challenges and opportunities when looking at the acquired commitments of the countries
at varying levels. Clearly there is general policy guidance but coordinated technical and financial support and implementation throughout and within all sectors is needed. In some instances, the private (for profit and non-profit) sector owns and/or operates the majority of economic and social infrastructure, thus impacting in the greatest way possible the populations that use its goods and services. There is an understanding of potential humanitarian assistance needs, but further work on coordinated response mechanisms must be completed. And there are multiple program approaches with monitoring, evaluation and reporting, but these must be consolidated in order to maximize resources and address the needs of the most vulnerable.
INTERVENTIONS

**Christine Braun, Permanent Mission of Canada to the OAS**

Canada strongly supports disaster risk reduction measures. Recognizing the linkages between adaptation, disaster risk reduction and other development-related issues, Canada encourages the international community to focus on bolstering and promoting existing international, regional, national and community efforts to prepare for hazards that may become more severe and more frequent due to climate change.

Canada encourages collaboration among the many players, agencies and fora that address these issues, and maintains that regional networks, such as the Inter-American System for Natural Disaster Mitigation, are important in addressing the challenges of disaster mitigation and preparedness.

In keeping with our collective commitments in the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015*, Canada believes it is important that we continue to invest in disaster risk reduction.

Using a range of financial mechanisms, Canada continues to invest in disaster risk reduction initiatives at home and abroad, through bilateral and multilateral channels.

In response to the impacts of the 2008 Atlantic hurricane season, Canada provided $7,260,000 in relief and reconstruction assistance. This assistance includes $5,600,000 in assistance to Haiti; $1,010,000 to Cuba; and $650,000 in response to the flooding in Central America.

Canada would like to express its appreciation for today’s informative presentations and looks forward to continuing to work with the OAS and other member states to address the issue of disaster mitigation and response in a more coherent and comprehensive manner.

**Wilson Dockhorn Jr., Permanent Mission of Brazil**

The Brazilian Delegation asked Mr. Jean Luc Poncelet, from PAHO, for more details on the concept of “safe hospitals”. Also, within the spirit of better coordination between organizations, the Brazilian Delegation invited the OAS, at its highest possible level, to participate in the 2nd Regional Meeting of International Mechanisms for Humanitarian Assistance, which will take place in the city of Florianópolis, Santa Catarina state, Brazil, from May 18th to May 20th 2009. A time slot in the agenda would
be reserved for the OAS to present its work and projects in the field of Humanitarian Assistance. A formal invitation should be sent shortly.

Ambassador LaCilia Prince, Permanent Representative of St Vincent and the Grenadines

Thank you for the floor, Assistant Secretary General, and I wish to take this opportunity to thank you for your leadership in convening this very important meeting for us. Indeed, it is essential for us, the Membership of the Organization to know what resources are available to us in our efforts to enhance our capacity in formulating disaster mitigation strategies and policies, so I wish to applaud your initiative in bringing together all the Inter-American agencies which are represented here today.

I had not previously heard of the Disaster mitigation meeting which will take place in Panama in March and I do look forward to receiving further details on it so that our Mission can ensure that St. Vincent and the Grenadines is an active participant at that forum.

Mr. Chair, I was very pleased to hear the representative of PAHO, Mr. Poncelet mention that it is their intention to work with the Embassies in Washington for the purposes of reviewing their respective countries’ response mechanisms. The expertise which resides in institutions such as PAHO can certainly be used by our National Emergency Management Office in making more robust their formulation of policies on disaster reduction and mitigation. I know that today’s meeting is one which focuses on disaster reduction and mitigation, but we must also have some modalities in place for when an actual disaster strikes. In fact, in my other capacity as Ambassador of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to the United States, one of the initiatives which my Embassy will be working on, is the creation of a comprehensive framework and guidelines for disaster response and relief which we can take to our Diaspora. We believe that our Diaspora living here in the United States can be an important resource to turn to in the face of natural disasters to assist in our relief efforts. Therefore, a well-established framework in which they can operate will be necessary. I do believe that an organization such as PAHO and others here represented can assist us in formulating those guidelines.

My final point is in the nature of a question, which is directed to Governor Mc Callum of AidMatrix. Do forgive me if you made this point and I missed it entirely, but I wish to know how a country such as mine can actually access the facility which is being offered by Aidmatrix. And more specifically, I would like to know what sort of technology infrastructure must be in place in order to effectively access the Aidmatrix Network.
Graziella Reyes de Prieto, Permanent Mission of Uruguay

The Representative of Uruguay stressed the importance of coordination for efficient humanitarian assistance. She referred to the role of the agencies engaged in the Inter-American System and pointed out the support they can provide, in particular the IDB, as a regional development platform.

Cletus Springer, Director of the Department of Sustainable Development, OAS General Secretariat

Disaster Risk Management is not an option. It is an absolute imperative for countries in the Hemisphere, who are highly vulnerable to a variety of natural hazards. Natural disasters deepen economic and social vulnerability while disaster risk management builds economic resilience. OAS Member states should take a comprehensive look at their development policies to ensure that they do not unwittingly deepen their vulnerability to natural disasters. In particular, all Member States should seek to build strong and diversified economies that have low exposure to natural hazard risks and that can recover quickly from the shocks of common events.

The Inter-American system offers an excellent framework for a sustained effort at building the risk management capacity of OAS member states. All the requisite instruments are present within this system. What is required now is irrevocable commitment from all participants in the system to make it work for the benefit of the peoples of the Americas.

Ambassador Anthony Johnson, Permanent Representative of Jamaica

In his intervention Ambassador Johnson expressed some critical issues of concern for Jamaica within the theme of Disaster Risk Management. Within the last decade the Small Island Caribbean States have been consistently affected by severe weather events such as storms and hurricanes. This in turn has had an adverse effect on all countries’ economy as the tourism industry (a key element of Jamaica’s economy, as well as other region’s countries) is greatly affected when tourism decreases each time the government declares a state of emergency. This issue is of serious concern as Ambassador Johnson explained these obstacles for development in the region.

Ambassador Johnson proceeded to make the point that the OAS does not currently have an effective system for Disaster Risk Management, particularly in regards to FONDEM which has had minimal voluntary funds since its creation and the Convention which has not been fully operational as it is yet to be ratified by member states.
Within the OAS, we must focus on the implementation of the various mandates of the Organization to address the issue of natural disasters. In this context, we are thankful for the seminar organized by the Assistant Secretary General, Ambassador Ramdin; who seeks to coordinate all the instruments that already exist within the framework of the OAS, such as the Inter-American Committee for Natural Disaster Reduction and the various mandates that have been given to the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development, particularly through the Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation (INDM).

Given the scarcity of resources, it is imperative to achieve the synergies between these mechanisms, as well as with other universal and sub-regional agencies. In this context, the Agreement on Cooperation between the Department of Sustainable Development of the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development of the OAS and United Nations Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR), it is of great importance.

My delegation considers it essential to take the opportunity to discuss preventive and coordination mechanisms for disasters that provide this type of workshop, as well as the Second Regional Meeting on International Mechanisms for Humanitarian Assistance, to be held this month (in Brazil); the Second Regional Meeting of the Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction to be held in March in Panama, and the First Meeting of National High Authorities in the Field of Disaster Reduction and Risk Management.

**Regional and sub-regional mechanisms**

The diversity of the hemisphere has led to the creation of mechanisms of attention and disaster management especially at the sub-regional level such as the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA), the Center for Natural Disaster Prevention in Central America (CEPREDENAC), the Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Assistance (CAPRADE), the White Helmets Initiative and the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB).

**The Rio Group**

The Working Group on Natural Disasters of the Rio Group (coordinated by Mexico) has led to reflection on the formation of a simplified system for emergency response to natural disasters in our region.
It is the goal of the Working Group to encourage synergies in the region to advance the common commitment to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, in particular through support to Member States of the Rio Group in the establishment and registration of National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction and other coordination mechanisms.

**First Regional Meeting on International Humanitarian Assistance Mechanisms**

Mexico hosted the First Regional Meeting on International Mechanisms for Humanitarian Assistance, which promoted a culture of prevention and preparedness for disaster risk reduction.

**Reunion on Emergency Care Devices Derived from Natural Disasters**

Mexico also hosted the Conference on Emergency Care Devices Derived from natural disasters, where they also discussed the need to strengthen coordination of humanitarian disaster.

**Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)**

Mexico also considers that the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), which is the mechanism of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), is innovative, expeditious, transparent and flexible for allocation of emergency resources to serve the international community.

**Christian Rehren, Permanent Mission of Chile**

The delegate of Chile, Christian Rehren expressed appreciation for the convocation of the meeting and, referring to the Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance, pointed to the impactful effect of disasters and efforts that can be made to stem it. He stressed that the instruments of the Inter-American System represent a tremendous progress and sharing best practices is key to disaster mitigation. The convening capacity of the OAS should assist in the mitigation efforts. Likewise the meeting of the Hemispheric Platform in Panama is important for coordination purposes. Finally, he made an appeal for the designation of focal points and support for the Inter-American Emergency Aid Fund (FONDEM).
CLOSING REMARKS

Ambassador Gustavo Albin, Permanent Representative of Mexico, Chair of the Hemispheric Security Committee

This workshop on disaster assistance and disaster management in the Americas is timely, as the protection of the environment and natural disaster mitigation are essential elements of the development agenda. Likewise, the multidimensional approach to security compels proper consideration of this issue. In Mexico’s view, the two areas of development and security are equally concerned.

Our efforts to provide hemispheric support for natural disaster mitigation are all the more important because OAS member states often have to face the high costs of disaster response and prevention, while at the same time they lack technical capacity to cope with natural phenomena alone. For this reason regional scaffolding is critical to help coordinate actions and increase the capacity to digest the plethoric information available.

We need to analyze what is being done at the OAS, within the Inter-American system, at the hemispheric and global level. This approach allows the countries in our region to better manage all the phases of natural disaster prevention and mitigation, including disaster management and rehabilitation. Further, it enhances inter-American partnership and solidarity.

As for the mechanisms of the system, FONDEM remains an important tool, reason why efforts should be made to revitalize it. We should also make good use of the $200,000.00 grant per disaster provided by IDB. It is important to launch a realistic reflection process on the opportunity to revise the Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance. If only three countries have ratified this instrument, there must be a reason for the lack of enthusiasm. I invite you (the Member States Delegations) to designate your National Coordinating Authority for the purpose of coordinating humanitarian assistance in case of emergencies. This will aid the revision and ratification process building on practical experiences.

We must support the implementation of the Inter-American Strategic Plan for Policy on Vulnerability Reduction, Risk Management and Disaster Response – known as IASP, adopted at the Thirty Third General Assembly in 2003, in harmony with the
Hyogo Framework for Action of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. We must agree on a single reporting mechanism that capitalizes on the existing instruments—the Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation (INDM) and the UN/ISDR HFA National Platforms, supporting our governments in advancing Disaster Risk Reduction across all sectors and levels of governance.

I invite the CSH to consider having the meeting of “High-level National Authorities on Natural Disaster Reduction and Risk Management” mandated pursuant AG/Res. 2314 (XXXVII-O/07), back to back to the 1st Session of the Regional Platform of the Americas in Panama City, on the afternoon of March 19th. This meeting is critical and requires proper preparation and an attractive agenda.

Finally, I join Ambassador Osmar Chohfi in thanking Ambassador Ramdin for this initiative and the opportunity provided to move this agenda forward for the benefit of our most vulnerable communities and the development of our nations, for a common purpose of democracy and prosperity in the Americas.

Thank you.
THE WAY FORWARD

Several concrete and practical actions to be undertaken were identified so as to move towards a more effective and efficient use of the existing mechanisms for disaster management and disaster risk reduction; namely FONDEM and the Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance.

OAS Member States should designate a National Coordinating Authority for the purpose of coordinating all assistance in case of emergency, whether for receiving or providing assistance, and pursuant to the terms of the Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance. With the ratification of three Member States, the Convention is currently in effect. Consequently Member States could designate their National Coordinating Authority, even if they have not yet ratified the Convention. This would provide for a single point of contact in case of a declared disaster, allowing for more cohesive and coordinated response and relief.

Consideration should be given to designating the previously mentioned National Coordinating Authority also as the National Operational Focal Point to the Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation (INDM). This would result in better coordination and more efficient use of available resources at all levels, national and regional. It would also forge closer coordination between national and regional emergency response agencies and sector ministries or secretaries—such as health, education, transportation, energy, commerce, etc. It is worth emphasizing the need to move beyond mainstreaming risk reduction to integrating risk reduction into development planning and policy across all sectors—productive and social services, and across all segments of the society—public, private, academic, and the organized civil society as a whole. Risk reduction must be addressed within each sector and within their individual agendas.

In preparation or substitution of the First Meeting of High-Level National Authorities on Natural Disaster Reduction and Risk Management, convened pursuant AG/Res. 2314 (XXXVII -O/07), the Committee on Hemispheric Security should consider convening a meeting in the afternoon of March 19th, 2009, in Panama City, right after the closing of the First Session of the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction of the Americas, with the participation of High-National Authorities on Natural Disaster Reduction and Risk Management. The First Session of the Regional Platform provides a unique opportunity to have national emergency response agencies, sector minis-
tries and secretaries, and foreign affairs ministries and offices at the same table, establishing public policy to integrate risk reduction at the highest policy and political level.

In order to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the FONDEM, the OAS Country Representative, in a Member State stricken by a disaster, and the UNDP Resident Representative should get in touch, right away once a disaster is declared, to coordinate efforts so as to ensure that FONDEM would respond to the most pressing needs identified through rapid assessments in consultation with the Government of the affected Member State. The need for voluntary contributions to FONDEM still remains, and in combination with this new approach could represent a significant improvement in its effectiveness.

Finally, while we recognize that Disaster Management and Disaster Mitigation involve a very distinctive and different set of measures, policies, and actors; their interdependence is evident, and equally critical for reducing the risk to disasters. The progress made in disaster preparedness and response may be soon offset and even exceeded by the increasing number of disasters and their each time more devastating effects. The installed capacity at national and local emergency response agencies will soon be overwhelmed given the increasing incidence of disasters, and in rising economic losses and setbacks in national development plans.
Seminar Photos
**APPENDIX**

**Background document**

This document was prepared by Pablo González, Chief of the Risk Management Program and Coordinator for Central America with the Department of Sustainable Development (DSD) of the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (GS/OAS). The opinions expressed by the author do not necessarily reflect the official view of the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States or its Member States.

The present document describes the existing instruments and mechanisms for Disaster Management and Disaster Mitigation within the Inter-American System, as established through the OAS General Assembly. It also describes the activities implemented by the OAS sister agencies operated within the Inter-American System in support to the decisions and commitments of the OAS Member States.

The purpose of the document is to provide the basis for discussion and review of the effectiveness and performance of existing mechanisms and instruments. It is also intended to identify pitfalls and challenges to their implementation on the ground, as well as opportunities for exploring synergies and horizontal cooperation among OAS Member States in order to reduce the risk to natural disasters and mitigate against the adverse impacts of natural disasters through a coordinated and cooperative Inter-American action.

**Disaster Management and Disaster Mitigation in the Americas: Instruments and Mechanisms**

OAS Member States have established several mechanisms and instruments to promote coordination and joint action to reduce the risk to natural disasters, mitigate their effects and respond to disaster emergencies.

Although until very recently efforts were focused on disaster response and emergency, in the last few years, however strategies and policies have shifted towards disaster risk reduction, by building resilience, reducing vulnerability and mitigating the effects of natural disasters. In the Americas, disaster management and disaster mitigation have been placed very high on the cooperation agenda, as most vulnerable communities live in international border areas and transboundary basins, and the impacts of natural disasters have proved to have economic and social impacts way beyond national territories of those most vulnerable and affected countries.

In 1991, OAS member States adopted the only regional binding instrument in the World for disaster assistance, the *Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disas*...
**Disaster Assistance.** Despite not having been implemented, and it is in force only in Panama, Peru and Uruguay, the Convention puts the Americas at the forefront of multinational cooperation for disaster emergency response and assistance. The Convention represents a breakthrough from soft law, recognizing the potential contribution of international law in the field of disasters. It is applicable whenever a state party furnishes assistance in response to a request from another state party and provides a comprehensive framework to address key issues of disaster assistance by addressing the following relevant topics:

(i) requests for and offers and acceptance of assistance;
(ii) mechanisms for national coordination;
(iii) direction and control of assistance;
(iv) transport of vehicles, equipment and supplies;
(v) access and transit routes;
(vi) security; and
(vii) claims and indemnity; it also regulates the participation of governmental and nongovernmental organizations, and defines the rules of procedure for all assistance personnel and the need for direct supervision from the assisted state. Some of the provisions in the Convention address the challenges and concerns currently faced by countries in disaster situations, such as the coordination of assistance, establishing the appointment of a National Coordinating Authority and the channels through which aid must be requested.

In 1995, the **Inter-American Emergency Aid Fund (FONDEM)** was created by the OAS General Assembly through resolution AG/Res. 1327 (XXV-O/95) to provide available social, humanitarian, material, technical, and financial aid to any member state of the Organization that is threatened by, has suffered from, or is in an emergency situation caused by natural disasters. The primary objective of FONDEM is to support the political role of the OAS in matters pertaining to emergency aid, and to demonstrate the solidarity of the member states. Funds would come from voluntary contributions from member states, non member states, international organizations, public or private enterprises, individuals, etc.

In an effort to move from response and assistance to disaster risk reduction, on June 7, 1999, the OAS General Assembly adopted Resolution AG/Res.1682 (XXIX-O/99), creating the **Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR)** as the “principal forum at the OAS for matters related to natural disasters”. IACNDR was established to provide the OAS Permanent Council access to “strategic thinking,
recommendations on initiatives related to natural disasters, and advice on methods of financing them, paying special attention to policies and programs designed to reduce the vulnerabilities of member States to natural disasters.” AG/Res. 1682 also constituted a response to the organization’s needs to address and internalize varied regional and international plans and strategies, which they adhere to and/or formulated, and that needed to be operationally implemented, namely: the Yokohama Strategy Plan of Action for a Safer World of the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction (1994), the Miami Declaration on Disaster Reduction and Sustainable Development (1996), the Inter-American Dialogue on Disaster Reduction and Sustainable Development report of 1997 and, the Plan of Action of the Second Summit of the Americas, held in Santiago, Chile, in April 1998.

In addition, AG/Res. 1682 acknowledges the need to have all the key players of the Inter-American system (IDB, PAHO, IADB, IICA, PAIGH, and CIDI) under one roof for better coordination, and recognizes and stresses the need to strengthen cooperation with all sub-regional intergovernmental organizations – the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA), the Coordination Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (CEPREDENAC), the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), and the Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Assistance (CAPRADE), while pushing for more inclusion of gender sensitive issues in disaster risk reduction related interventions, by cooperating with the Inter-American Commission for Women (CIM), deepening collaboration with the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN/OCHA – UN/ISDR), and increasing the role of the private sector in addressing disaster related impacts through partnership interventions with the Pan-American Development Foundation of the Organization of American States (PADF).

The amended statutes of the IACNDR, as per AG/Res.2182 (XXXVI O/06), adopted at the XXXVI General Assembly, in Guatemala, on June 6, 2006, and the latest resolution on Natural Disaster Reduction, Risk Management, and Assistance in Natural and other Disaster Situations, AG/Res. 2314 (XXXVII O/07), take into account the latest institutional and strategic changes, as well as the latest scientific findings, as they relate to disaster risk reduction.

Consistent with the recommendations of the first Inter-American Meeting of Ministers and High Authorities of Sustainable Development, in December 2006, where the General Secretariat of the OAS, through the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development and its Department of Sustainable Development (SEDI/DSD), established the Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation (INDM), in 2007, the XXXVII Gen-
eral Assembly, convened in Panama, assigned a unique position to the INDM “...as the permanent hemispheric mechanism for strengthening practical cooperation among intergovernmental agencies in the area of disaster reduction, especially by sharing technical information and best practices.”

AG/Res. 2314 further recognizes the need to coordinate efforts with relevant agencies of the United Nations System in order to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held in Kobe, Japan, in January, 2005.

The Inter-American Program for Sustainable Development (PIDS 2006 – 2009) sets strategic priorities for the next five years, along the lines of seven major strategic areas:

(i) Sustainable agriculture, sustainable management of forests and other natural resources;
(ii) Water resources, land and health;
(iii) Natural hazard risk management;
(iv) Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity;
(v) Coastal zone management and adaptation to climate change;
(vi) Renewable energy and energy efficiency promotion; and
(vii) Capacity building and institutional strengthening for sustainable development and environmental management.

Finally, the IACNDR is responsible for monitoring implementation of the Inter-American Strategic Plan for Policy on Vulnerability Reduction, Risk Management and Disaster Response (IASP) which aims to build resilience among the OAS member States to natural hazard events and decrease their dependency on the international community for emergency assistance when those events occur.

All the instruments and mandates which emerge from the OAS General Assembly, the Summit of the Americas Process, and more particularly, the Summit on Sustainable Development of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, of 1996, and its follow-up process provide specific directives to the GS/OAS, through its Executive Secretariat for Integral Development and its Department of Sustainable Development (SEDI/DSD.) In the end, PIDS summarizes all the mandates that emerge from the highest policy-making bodies in the Americas, and defines the directives to SEDI/DSD, which are focused on ex-ante disaster action –disaster risk reduction and disaster mitigation.
The state of the implementation of the various instruments

As of today, the *Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance* has not been implemented; and no OAS Member State has designated their National Coordinating Authority. Hence, AG/Res. 2184 (XXXVI-O/06) and AG/Res. 2314 (XXXVII-O/07) “invite those member states that have not already done so to give consideration to signing and/or ratifying the Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance, as the case may be, and to adopt the measures necessary for its effective implementation,” and “urge the states parties to the Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance to designate a National Coordinating Authority pursuant to the terms of the Convention and to notify the General Secretariat of that designation”. AG/Res. 2314 further encourages to “consider the functions of the National Operational Focal Points of the INDM,” in naming the National Coordinating Authority to the Convention.

The *FONDEM* has not received any voluntary contribution since its creation. However, in the spirit of the solidarity for which it was established and the authority vested to the OAS Secretary General, FONDEM has consistently made contributions to OAS Member States that request OAS assistance in cases of emergency and leverages additional funds through PADF. Still, FONDEM contributions remain mainly as an expression of solidarity, without significant weight in the overall international assistance. The table below shows FONDEM and other Organizations Disbursements for 2006 and 2007 (in US$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FONDEM</td>
<td>160,000.00</td>
<td>50,000.00</td>
<td>210,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PADF</td>
<td>282,825.00</td>
<td>28,477.00</td>
<td>311,302.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BID</td>
<td>3,447,502.00</td>
<td>447,500.00</td>
<td>3,895,002.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CERF</td>
<td>26,009,078.00</td>
<td>2,220,939.00</td>
<td>28,230,017.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFRC</td>
<td>15,189,739.00</td>
<td>15,968,606.00</td>
<td>31,158,345.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>45,091,151.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>18,717,528.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>63,804,666.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The *Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR)* last met on September 24, 2007, at the Headquarters of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Washington DC. Secretary General Mr. José Miguel Insulza chaired the meeting, which sought to enhance the cooperation among the key institutional actors of the Inter-American System, the UN System, and sub-regional intergovernmental organizations, so that coordinated policies and programs are formulated and jointly implemented.
The meeting brought together the highest level officials of the Inter-American System, officials from sub-regional intergovernmental organizations; the Director General of the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) of Jamaica, who is also co-chair of INDM; a representative of the Secretariat of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR); delegates from OAS Member States and Observers to the OAS; International Financial institutions; and various international development agencies partners of the OAS.

Members of IACNDR agreed on several priorities for action, such as: strengthening information exchange to more effectively assist member countries with disaster mitigation; the need to focus on natural hazard vulnerability reduction at all levels and within all sector, mainstreaming risk management, as a matter of policy and practical intervention, across all sectors; the need for more comprehensive land-use planning with natural hazard considerations; and the need to deepen coordination, under the OAS, as means to avoid duplication of interventions amongst the different actors of the Inter-American system, sub-regional organizations and other private and public entities having the technical capacities for efficiently addressing disaster risk reduction related issues. However, not much progress has been made in concrete, on-the-ground inter-agency collaboration to implement the policy decisions of the IACNDR.

In the mean time, SG/OAS, through its Executive Secretariat for Integral Development and its Department of Sustainable Development (SEDI/DSD), has continued to support the priorities of OAS Member States in adapting to and managing the increasing risks associated with natural hazards, by providing them technical and policy recommendations.

Furthermore, SEDI/DSD has established a close coordination with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR) as a means of advancing the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) in the Americas and the Inter-American Strategic Plan for Policy on Vulnerability Reduction, Risk Management and Disaster Response (IASP). Through this arrangement it is also seeking to optimize the use of resources throughout the region, including human and financial resources of government agencies responsible for prevention, mitigation and response to disasters triggered by natural hazards. To that end, in 2007, SEDI/DSD signed a Memorandum of Understanding with UN/ISDR, and a supplementary instrument for the co-execution of the UN/ISDR Regional Platform of the Americas in October 2008.

With funding of approximately CA$250,000.00 from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA,) UN/ISDR, through its Regional Unit for the Americas lo-
cated in Panama, and SEDI/DSD are undertaking a hemispheric study on the existing legal, administrative and institutional instruments. This also includes examining the technical and institutional capacity at all levels for advancing the HFA strategic objectives in the hemisphere. The findings will be presented during March 17-19, 2009, at the First Session of the Regional Platform, in Ciudad del Saber, Panama, along with reports from National and Regional Platform. The hemispheric study will identify overlaps and potential discrepancies between the UN/ISDR HFA and the OAS IASP, so as to draw recommendations for a better alignment of both processes. The study will also look into the existing instruments and arrangements between the sub-regional and hemispheric inter-governmental organizations, IGOs, so as to identify each organization’s value-added and areas of competence, capacity building requirements, and needs for supplementary arrangements –including legal, administrative, technical and financial instruments, for promoting synergies and inter-agency cooperation across all levels –from hemispheric to regional, national and local levels. In addition to these coordination efforts, SEDI/DSD implements a series of projects and activities on the ground in support of specific priorities established by OAS Member States. Annex I includes a list of most relevant projects and activities.

All these activities and projects are arranged within an Action Program, which serves as the programmatic framework for action by SEDI/DSD. The Risk Management Program –RISK-MACC [in the context of Adaptation to Climate Change] integrates the key objectives of risk reduction with overarching goals of “good” governance, poverty alleviation, strengthening of democracies, and increasing job and income opportunities, as integral goals of reducing the risk posed by natural hazards.

SEDI/DSD executes projects and activities specifically designed to implement actions towards mainstreaming Risk Management into Sustainable Development policy and planning, as well as projects under other thematic areas and programs that contribute to the overall objective of RISK-MACC. Some of these projects support specific actions for achieving one or more of the two specific objectives of the Program: (i) reduce Risk to natural disasters; and (ii) to increase Adaptive Capacity to Climate Change. See Annex II.

**The way forward**

Given the latest requests from several OAS Member States to promote cooperation on the implementation of existing instruments, below, a course of action is presented for consideration of all Member States.
For Member States:

1) Designate a National Coordinating Authority for the purpose of coordinating all assistance in case of emergency, whether for receiving or providing assistance, and pursuant to the terms of the *Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance*;

2) Designate the previously mentioned National Coordinating Authority as the National Operational Focal Point to the *Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation (INDM)*. Those who have already designated their National Operational Focal Point review its designation, reconfirm or reassign it accordingly;

3) Designate an expert from the National Coordinating Authority/ INDM National Operational Focal Point, allocating time, to be part of a Working Group for the preparation of a Collaborative Action Plan for Disaster Management;

4) Designate a Legal expert for the revision of the *Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance*, so as to ratify the Convention and provide –if necessary, comments for the drafting of an amendment; and

5) Approve the change of date and place of the First Meeting of High-Level National Authorities on Natural Disaster Reduction and Risk Management, pursuant AG/Res. 2314 (XXXVII -O/07), to March 19, 2009, in Panama City, immediately after the closing of the First Session of the HFA Regional Platform of the Americas.

For Agencies and GS/OAS bodies:

1) For the Office of the GS/OAS: Convene a meeting of the IACNDR to distribute responsibilities among its members. The meeting will seek to establish financing mechanisms, reporting processes and schedules, and policies on coordination;

2) For SEDI/DSD: Establish a Virtual Discussion Forum, using the technological platform of the INDM, and facilitate the drafting of the Collaborative Action Plan for Disaster Management; and

3) For SEDI/DSD: Establish a Virtual Discussion Forum, using the technological platform of the INDM, and the pool of experts from the Inter-American Forum on Environmental Law (FIDA,) to support the revision of the *Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance*, so as to assist OAS Member States with the process of ratification.
Annex I –RISK-MACC Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second Phase of the IFRC/ProVention Project on Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment in Central America and South America (Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras and Brazil)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>This is the second phase of a cooperation agreement with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) for the implementation of community-based Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (AVC) tool and the Tool Box – “Better be Ready” developed during the first phase of this cooperation. In this second phase activities are geared towards assessing the performance and impact of AVC and the “Better be Ready” tool box in the four Central American participating countries, Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Honduras, as well as to conduct a cost-benefit analysis with the participation of local private enterprises, which provide for income sources and employment to Barra Mansa community members, and the Barra Mansa Municipality, in the State of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Applying Information and Communication Technology for Disaster Mitigation in the Central American Isthmus (SICA Member States: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and Dominican Republic)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With financial support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), through the Inter-American Institute for Connectivity (ICA) of Canada in the amount of CA$252,700.00, SEDI/DSD executes an 18-month project designed to identify and assess the performance of innovative Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) applications for disaster mitigation. The beneficiary countries are: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and Dominican Republic.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Program for the Promotion of Flood Early Warning Systems (F-EWS) in Small Valleys (SICA Member States: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and Dominican Republic)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The project is executed with the financial support of the Government of Germany, through the UN Global Platform for the Promotion of Early Warning (UN-GPPEW). With a duration of 24 months, the Project objective is to develop a Regional Platform for the replication and sustainability of the Small Valley Program (SVP), under which, between 1995 and 2001, SEDI/DSD supported disaster reconstruction and mitigation activities in several valleys in three of the six countries of Central America –more than 20 valleys were involved in Honduras, and some others in Guatemala and Nicaragua. The Regional Platform will connect National Emergency Systems with local governments and local communities, establishing a regional cadre of experts and a network of community champions/leaders. Participation of CEPREDENAC and the Central American Regional Committee on Hydraulic Resources (CRRH) will provide for regional coordination and deliver high-tech information produced by Earth Observation Systems (EOS), as well as the integration of Climate Change scenarios for longer term adaptation to Climate Variability.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OAS/DSD’s Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation (INDM) will provide the technological platform as well as the institutional framework at the regional and national level for the establishment of a Regional Platform for the replication and sustainability of the SVP.

**Caribbean Emergency Legislation Project (CARICOM Member States: Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica, Barbados, St. Lucia, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Belize)**

With funding from the World Bank Institutional Development Fund, in the amount of US$350,000.00, SEDI/DSD supports the development of recommendations to improve the legal and institutional frameworks related to state of emergency, and budget appropriation and execution in emergency situations.

**Activities under the Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation (All OAS Member States)**

With financial support from CIDA, SEDI/DSD organized, in December of 2007, the First Hemispheric Encounter on “Cost-Benefit Analysis: Making a case to invest in Vulnerability Reduction in the Americas.” The Encounter gathered experts and policy and decision-makers from the Americas. Given the advances experienced in Colombia, Bogota was chosen as the host city for the event, seeking to show-case the Colombian experience as a reference for discussion. Experts and program officers from sister organizations from the Inter-American and UN Systems also attended the Encounter with the main objective to move towards a common agenda and a division of labor among cooperation agencies. A policy paper with contributions of all relevant international, regional and national organizations is under preparation, based on the discussions and the report of the Encounter. Making a case for the cost-effectiveness of investing in reducing vulnerability and ex-ante risk management, compared to recovery and reconstruction –ex-post disaster management, requires of large amount of data, which may take decades to be collected and will hardly be comparable. Cost-benefit Analysis entails not only comparing the additional cost to reduce vulnerability to the costs of recovery and rehabilitation, the economic losses in agriculture, tourism and other productive sectors; but also the cost of business interruptions across all sectors, including government; the additional costs in health services due to injuries caused by the events and the spread of diseases; the additional costs in trade due to interruption of communication and transportation networks; and the additional costs due to interruption of school operations, among others. The Encounter took a multi-variable and multi-risk management approach, in a more holistic and pragmatic fashion.

Between the months of October 2007 and July of 2008, five (5) Virtual Forums on Good Practices have been carried out using the technological platform of the Network. These Forums of Good Practices were designed to support the on-going consultations and analysis undertaken under the SEDI/DSD CQA, Flood Early Warning Systems in Small Valleys Programs and the outcomes of the Cost-Benefit Analysis Encounter held in Colombia. Practices and practical experiences were recorded and discussed through the Forums, and technical criteria drawn for the identification of “good” practices. Comprehensive analytical reports are been prepared to be published by the third quarter of 2008.
Other Activities and Initiatives:

Other activities and initiatives include: Phase III of the School Retrofitting Program in Central America (PRECA); a Project Proposal to support education infrastructure in Pisco, Peru; the formulation of a Program to Increase the Resilience of Local Communities in the context of increasing Climate Variability; and the formulation of new proposals to expand SEDI/DSD support on Construction Quality Assurance in Haiti and other Small Island Developing States, and to develop empirical evidence at the community level of the returns of investing in vulnerability reduction.
**Annex II – Other SEDI/DSD Projects that contribute to RISK-MACC**

Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) of transboundary basins: In cooperation with UNEP, the GEF, and regional inter-governmental organizations, SEDI/DSD executes the following projects:

1) Framework Program for the Sustainable Management of the Water Resources of the La Plata Basin with respect to the Effects of Climate Variability and Change (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay);

2) Integrated Water Resource Management and Sustainable Development of the San Juan River Basin and its Coastal Zone (Costa Rica and Nicaragua,) known as PROCUENCA-SAN JUAN;

3) Integrated and Sustainable Management of Transboundary Water Resources in the Amazon River Basin (Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela;) and

4) Implementation of the Strategic Action Program for the Bermejo River Bional Basin (Argentina and Bolivia.) All these projects contribute to at least one of the Program objectives, if not to all.

Other examples of cross-thematic areas projects that fall into the Program are those under the SEDI/DSD Program for Sustainable Land Management, which contribute to the reduction of vulnerability and promote environmentally-sound land-use planning, mitigation of land-degradation impacts, as well as ecosystem conservations and protection of coastal-zone mangroves and coral reefs, watershed sources and deltas, and river banks.
Annex III –SEDI/DSD Calendar of Events for 2009

March 16, City of Panama. Meeting of the INDM National Operational Focal Points;

March 17-19, City of Panama. First Session of the Regional Platform of the Americas, UN HFA;

May 4-8, Institute of Space Studies Mario Gulich, Space Center Teofilo Tabanera, Falda del Carmen, Province of Cordoba, Argentina. SEDI/DSD –INDM –CONAE “Training on Applying Remote Sensing Technology for Flood Risk Management”

June, Geneva, Switzerland. Second Session of the Global Platform of the HFA

Date and Place TBD, Second SEDI/DSD –INDM Hemispheric Encounter on “Cost-Benefit Analysis: Making a case to invest on Vulnerability Reduction in the Americas”
Workshop Agenda

“Disaster Assistance and Disaster Management in the Americas”

February 10, 2009

10:00 – 10:15 am  Opening session
Remarks by:

• Ambassador Albert Ramdin, Assistant Secretary General of the OAS

• Ambassador Osmar Chohfi, Permanent Representative of Brazil, Chair of the Permanent Council (TBC)

10:15 – 11:30 am  Mechanisms to assist member States, Achievements and Challenges of the Inter-American System: the way forward; Possible Restructuring and Action Plan.
Presentation by:

• Pablo González of OAS/DSD, 

• Jean Luc Poncelet from PAHO,

• Cassandra Rodgers from IDB,

• Santiago Borrero from PAIGH (TBC),

• Christine Herridge from PADF,

• Gov. Scott McCallum from AidMatrix (TBC)

• Stephen Bender, Independent Expert

11:30 – 12:45 pm  Comments by Representatives of Member States and Observer States and Experts from sister agencies: Observations, suggestions, initiatives.

12:45 – 1:00 pm  Closing Remarks

• Ambassador Albert Ramdin, Assistant Secretary General of the OAS

• Ambassador Gustavo Albin, Permanent Representative of Mexico, Chair of the Hemispheric Security Committee.
BIOGRAPHIES OF PANELISTS AND AUTHORITIES

Ambassador Albert R. Ramdin

Albert R. Ramdin was elected OAS Assistant Secretary General on June 7, 2005, and took office on July 19. The Surinamese diplomat has had a distinguished career in public service at the national and international level, serving before his election to the OAS as Ambassador at Large and Special Adviser to the Government of the Republic of Suriname on Western Hemispheric Affairs.

In Suriname, Ramdin served as Senior Adviser to the Minister of Trade and Industry, where he was intensively involved in restructuring the ministry and implementing an industrial development program. In the mid-1990s, he worked for two years in the private sector before returning to public service when he was appointed Adviser to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Finance.

Ambassador Osmar Chohfi

Since May 2005 Mr. Chohfi has been the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the Organization of American States. Chaired the Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs, and currently is the President of the OAS Permanent Council.

Among the functions performed in the Secretariat of State for Foreign Affairs, was Chief of the Division II South America.

Ambassador Chohfi served in the Embassies of Brazil in Paris, La Paz, Buenos Aires and Caracas. As Ambassador, led the Embassy of Brazil in Quito and Madrid.

Pablo González

Pablo González is the Chief of the Risk Management Program and Coordinator for Central America with the Department of Sustainable Development (DSD) of the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States. He is also co-chair of the Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation (INDM) and a member of the ProVention Consortium Advisory Council.
As Chief of the **DSD Risk Management Program**, he is the Principal Specialist and Adviser to the Director of the Department, providing technical and policy advice to Member States on matters related to natural disaster risk management. He serves as liaison between the GS/OAS and national level development planning offices, ministries of environment and water, and competent national institutions on disaster mitigation. He also serves as liaison with regional and international agencies involved in Risk Management and Sustainable Development. He is responsible for the identification of policies and projects for Member States. He oversights and directs all fund raising efforts and the development of partnerships for technical cooperation with relevant international agencies, donors and development banks.

**Dr. Jean Luc Poncelet**

Dr. Poncelet, a national of Belgium, received his medical degree from Louvain University in Belgium in 1983. In 1984, he was awarded a Diploma in Tropical Medicine by the Institute of Tropical Medicine of Antwerpen and, in 1985, he received a master in public health from *Université Libre de Bruxelles*.

Dr. Poncelet started working for the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) in 1986 as an Associate Expert in Disaster Relief in Costa Rica. He was appointed to the sub regional position of Emergency Preparedness Advisor for the Caribbean in Antigua in 1989. In 1991, he was transferred to the Caribbean Program Coordination (CPC) in Barbados and subsequently to Ecuador in 1995, where he continued to work in the same field. In 1999, he was reassigned to PAHO Headquarters in Washington, D.C. as the Regional Advisor on Emergency Preparedness. In May 2002 he was appointed Area Manager of the Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Relief position he occupies presently. He has been involved in most major disasters in the region since 1986.

**Cassandra Rogers**

Dr. Rogers is currently the Senior Natural Disasters Specialist at the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and previously served as Project Manager of the Disaster Mitigation Facility for the Caribbean at the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) in Barbados, where she supervised a programme designed to strengthen CDB’s institutional capacity for disaster risk management and to assist CDB’s borrowing member countries to mainstream disaster risk management into development planning.
Dr. Rogers has over 20 years of experience in natural hazard management in the Caribbean. From 1984 to 2003, she held the position of Lecturer in Engineering Geology and in Natural Hazard Management in the Department of Civil Engineering, the University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago. She has been an international consultant in the areas of hazard and vulnerability assessment, natural hazard mitigation and geographic information systems and has developed and delivered several training courses in hazard mapping, vulnerability assessment and in natural hazard mitigation planning. She has several technical publications in these areas.

**Santiago Borrero**

Santiago Borrero, Secretary General of the Pan American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH), an organization of the Organization of American States (OAS) with headquarters in Mexico City, Mexico, has 28 years of experience in information and development, especially in the production and application of geographic information for developing nations. Mr. Borrero has chaired the Global Spatial Data Infrastructure (GSDI) and the Permanent Committee on SDI for the Americas (PC-IDEA), among other posts, and oversees PAIGH’s grants program for strategic research in the region in the disciplines of geography, cartography, geophysics, and history.

**Christine Herridge**

Prior to working at the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF), an affiliate of the OAS, Ms. Herridge was the founding Coordinator of the Dominican Disaster Mitigation Association in the Dominican Republic from 1994 to 2004. The ADMD is a self-sustaining NGO specialized in disaster mitigation (www.desastre.org) across disciplines and sectors. In 2004 she joined the Pan American Development Foundation (www.padf.org) to continue with a wider focus across the region. This allows her to further integrate the private sector in all phases of disaster management. Initiatives involve the US Chamber of Commerce, their Business Civic Leadership Center, the Association of American Chambers of Commerce of Latin America and the individual American Chambers of Commerce in the region. As PADF’s representative on the Board of the OAS Disaster Mitigation Network she works directly with the diplomatic corps, the OAS Sustainable Development team, and the Inter American Defense Board and Defense College.
Governor Scott McCallum

Governor Scott McCallum has more than 30 years of executive experience leading cross-functional divisions including operations planning, supply management, media and public relations, marketing and development, government relations and strategic partnerships. He served as Wisconsin Governor, with a career spanning more than a decade in public service office.

McCallum is President and CEO of the Aidmatrix Foundation, a nonprofit that uses advanced information technology to create efficiencies between donors and those in need. As CEO, he has grown the Aidmatrix Foundation to globally transact $1.5 billion annually with operations in six continents to 35,000 nonprofits recipients. The work ranges from distribution of medical products for U.S. Free Clinics and international Non-Government Organizations (NGO) to program partnerships with global organizations like International Red Cross and the World Food Program. Most charitable food donations in the United States go through channels using Aidmatrix technologies for collection and distribution. The Aidmatrix bundle of solution systems was recently designated as “the Network” to be used in preparedness for American disaster relief, with endorsements from federal branches and inter-state coalitions.

Stephen Bender

Stephen Bender is an architect and independent consultant on risk management and development issues. From 1983 to 2005, he served as principal specialist and division chief in the Department of Sustainable Development (DSD) and its predecessors, project chief of the Natural Hazards Project, and advisor to the director of DSD on issues of planning and environmental management. Before taking this position, he was project chief for the DSD in Uruguay. He also worked as an international consultant from 1976 until 1979, and between 1973 and 1976 he was a founding member of the Rice Center for Community Design and Research at Rice University, and directed the Latin American Program. He was also a faculty member at the Rice University School of Architecture.
Ambassador Gustavo Albin, Permanent Representative of Mexico, Chair of the Hemispheric Security Committee

Ambassador Gustavo Albin was born in Mexico City on November 10, 1952. He studied law at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico.

In the performance of different positions throughout his career, he has participated as member or head of Mexican delegations at countless international and regional conferences and meetings related to political, economic and social issues.

Ambassador Gustavo Albin has been the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the Organization of American States since September 2007.
List of Participants

1. Albin Gustavo, Permanent Representative of Mexico, Chair of the Hemispheric Security Commission
2. Alcantara Virgilio, Permanent Representative of the Dominican Republic
3. Alvarado Agnes, Permanent Mission of Nicaragua
4. Antoine Ancil, Inter-American Defense Board
5. Argudin Jose, Inter-American Defense Board
7. Betz Travis, American Red Cross / International Response Operations
9. Borrero Santiago, Director of the Pan-American Institute of Geography and History
10. Branh Atheline, Embassy of Barbados
11. Braun Christine, Permanent Mission of Canada
12. Campuzano J. Luis, Permanent Mission of Mexico
13. Chitwood Evie, US Department of Transportation
14. Chohfi Osmar, Permanent Representative of Brazil, Chair of the Permanent Council
15. Dockhorn Jr. Wilson, Permanent Mission of Brazil
16. Dormeus Jean Ricot, Office of the Assistant Secretary General of the OAS
17. Ferino Mario, Inter-American Defense Board
18. Forbes, Jules Permanent Mission of Guyana
19. Gonzalez Pablo, OAS Department of Sustainable Development
20. Hackshaw Janine, Embassy of Trinidad and Tobago
22. Herridge Christine, Pan-American Development Foundation
23. Jimenez Carlos, Permanent Mission of Peru
24. Johnson Anthony, Permanent Representative of Jamaica
25. Laviolette D Pierre, Permanent Mission of Haiti
26. Lezcano Nubia, Permanent Mission of Panama
27. Lucien Pineda Carlos, Permanent Mission of Colombia
28. Manos Despina, Observer Mission of the European Union
29. McCallum Scott, President and CEO of AidMatrix Foundation
30. Mckay Bridget, Permanent Mission of the Bahamas
31. Oberg T. Elis, Inter-American Defense Board
32. Omy Ruth, Permanent Mission of United States
33. Pagnier Marie France, Observer Mission of France
34. Peña Jonathan, Permanent Mission of the United States
35. Piedras Graciela, OAS Inter-American Commission on Telecommunications
36. Plazas Carlos Ivan, Permanent Mission of Colombia
37. Poncelet Jean Luc, Pan-American Health Organization
38. Prince LaCelia, Permanent Reprentative of St Vincent and the Grenadines
39. Quiñones Alfonso, Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission for Integral Development
40. Raajenberg S. Michiel, Permanent Mission of Suriname
41. Racine Jean Marc, OAS Department of Sustainable Development
42. Ramdin Albert, Assistant Secretary General of the OAS
43. Raskovan Florencia, OAS Secretariat of Multidimensional Security
44. Rehren Christian, Permanent Mission of Chile
45. Reyes de Prieto Graziella, Permanent of Uruguay
46. Rogers Cassandra, Inter-American Development Bank
47. Rolle Judith-Anne, Permanent Mission of the Commonwealth of Dominica
48. Samayoa de Gonzalez Elsa, Permanent Mission of Guatemala
49. Santa Maria Carolina, OAS Permanent Council Secretariat
50. Smith A. Cornelius, Permanent Representative of the Bahamas
51. Solitahe Odlum Yasmin, Inter-American Commission on Women
52. Springer, Cletus, OAS Department of Sustainable Development
53. Stein Abraham, OAS Secretariat of Multidimensional Security
54. Trejo Rosa, OAS Department of Sustainable Development
55. Triplett Nell, Permanent Mission of the United States of America
56. Williams Michelle-Ann, OAS Department of Sustainable Development