



**“TOWARDS A CENTRAL AMERICAN COMPREHENSIVE RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY:
A REGIONAL CHALLENGE TEN YEARS AFTER MITCH”**

Mitch +10 Declaration

Context

1. We national, regional and international participants and members of governmental institutions and civil society, on the occasion of the Mitch + 10 Regional Forum, and following a process of analysis, consultation, participation and discussion, have agreed to the following Declaration:

2. In the framework of the Central American Integration System, our region has adopted policies, strategies, plans and agreements to achieve sustainable development.

3. The national reports presented at the Mitch +10 Regional Forum reflect recognition of the underlying economic, social and environmental causes of disasters and the magnitude of their impacts. Institutional agreements and interventions increasingly have focused on reducing existing risks and preventing future ones. Risk management has taken precedence over traditional forms of disaster response and is regarded today as a cross-cutting and comprehensive approach to sustainable development and integrated human security in our societies.

4. This perspective has raised the profile of common local disasters by recognizing that the impacts of most major disasters, such as Hurricane Mitch are, in fact, the cumulative effect of local disasters concentrated in time and a given territory. These lesser disasters are conceptualized in the Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2009 as “extensive risks.”

5. Risk is dynamic in that it is a process of constant structuring and restructuring. A regional development context that fails to effectively incorporate risk reduction principles ultimately generates conditions of vulnerability. Extensive risks associated with social and natural hazards influenced by climate change and our social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities, quickly mount. This process constantly undermines the resilience of our rural and urban communities, seriously jeopardizing their livelihoods.

6. The considerable evolution of this field in recent years led to a sectoral vision of risk and risk management in which the issue is regarded as the responsibility of a series of specialized bodies. One of the main challenges is how to overcome this sectoral, specialized vision. Risk is a cross-cutting issue that requires comprehensive, integrated solutions.

7. The governmental structure and its resources continue to be highly centralized and limited. More emphasis must be placed on strengthening mechanisms for governance, decentralization and building community autonomy and resilience.

8. The Central American region has produced and compiled countless successful experiences in different areas of risk management. Most of these initiatives, however,



have been associated with processes supported by international cooperation and organized civil society, and, in many cases they have not been transferred in a sustained manner into governmental policies, structures and budgets.

Acknowledging

9. The existence and legal force of instruments such as the Strategic Framework for the Reduction of Vulnerability, approved at the 20th Presidential Summit of 1999; the Regional Disaster Reduction Plan (RDRP), a number of national strategies and plans, and the sectoral strategies of SICA's specialized secretariats and institutions.

10. The urgent need to coordinate comprehensive risk management with SICA's policies and strategies for poverty reduction, the environment, climate change, food and nutritional security, health, migration, and transportation, among others.

11. The 34th Meeting of Presidents held in Nicaragua on June 29, 2009, acknowledging receipt of the SICA's proposed Multi-Year Plan for 2009-2011 and instructing the General Secretariat and CEPREDENAC to develop guidelines for the Central American Policy for Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management, which must be submitted for approval at the next Ordinary Meeting of Presidents.

12. International, multilateral and bilateral agreements on integrated risk management, particularly the Hyogo Framework for Action, approved in 2005.

13. The solidarity and accompaniment of international cooperation in national and regional risk management processes.

14. The efforts of organized civil society to promote processes and adopt approaches in support of local risk management.

15. The technical, scientific, social and political contributions of the various stakeholders committed to this Regional Forum.

16. The strong commitment expressed by the Government of Guatemala and its technical and logistical support, which has contributed substantially to the success of this Regional Forum.

We declare

17. The urgent need that comprehensive disaster risk management be viewed as an intrinsic aspect of public planning and investment processes. In accordance with the principle of sphere of competence, each public entity must reduce risk in its own social or productive activities and must avoid creating new risks.

18. There is a pressing need to urge SICA's Councils of Ministers and specialized institutions, particularly SIECA and SISCA, to incorporate comprehensive risk management into their regional planning mechanisms, so as to ensure that international and regional policy frameworks are applied at the national and local levels, with a view towards fostering a culture of safety and resilience.



19. Men and women are differently affected by disasters and are likewise assigned differentiated roles in risk management and development processes. It is necessary to raise the profile of these differences in order to reduce gender disparities and promote equal opportunity through new social and institutional strategies.

20. It is essential to shift from project-centered approaches to those with a greater emphasis on sustainable processes. We must reduce our dependence on international cooperation if we are to successfully integrate risk management processes in our societies.

21. Efforts to enhance understanding of risk through training, and change attitudes through the formal education system, must continue and be consolidated. Central American ministries of education must ensure the sustainability of these processes through the identification of mechanisms to assimilate them into educational structures.

22. It is important to promote the development of a multi-level, territorial approach that transcends administrative structures, so that the focus of CEPREDENAC, the Environmental Sub-System and SICA's specialized secretariats and institutions is premised on principles of homogeneous, homologous and strategic areas included in the chapter on sustainable development of SICA's Multiyear Plan.

23. Local capacity-building for risk reduction and disaster response must be intensified to consolidate the autonomy and resilience of communities and territories.

24. It is urgent to encourage CEPREDENAC, FEMICA and national municipal development organizations to coordinate and promote the systemic integration of territorial, environmental urban and risk management into local development.

25. Risk management requires a broad-based participatory approach involving all sectors of society, through government mechanisms and instruments that ensure access to information, decision-making processes, and public oversight and audit.

26. Risk-generation and disregard for conditions of vulnerability imply responsibilities that must be assumed to the fullest extent. State and regional oversight entities are therefore urged to reinforce systems for oversight and accountability in order to delineate these responsibilities and the attendant consequences.

27. SICA's Advisory Committee, CEPREDENAC and national entities responsible for risk management must foster the participation of organized civil society representatives with risk management capacity in national and regional systems.

28. The Central American Policy for Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management must clearly set out the commitments to be adopted by the governments, and include a series of instruments and mechanisms to ensure their implementation.

29. It is imperative that national institutions, with the support of CEPREDENAC's Executive Secretariat, develop legal and institution-strengthening instruments that will enable them to move quickly to institutionalize, internalize, and assimilate the processes, experiences and products developed through international cooperation projects.



30. The coordinating secretariats of SICA sub-systems and the Executive Secretariat of CEPREDENAC are urged to identify the most appropriate institutional arrangements to promote actions based on a political platform at the highest level in the region. A priority is to consolidate inter-secretariat regional coordination mechanisms, in the framework of SICA's modernization process.

31. CEPREDENAC, CSUCA, CRRH and the CCAD are called on to develop mechanisms for the regional exchange and integration of technical-scientific information. This will require developing and supporting regulations and protocols. It is essential to leverage and enhance the installed capacity of institutions that produce such information, particularly government agencies, universities, and research institutes and centers.

32. CEPREDENAC and SIECA must promote the systematization of information and criteria to measure, quantify and assess the damage caused by disasters, and must ensure that this information is available for decision-making processes when preparing or assessing investment projects. It is necessary to promote economic assessment methodologies that incorporate risk management into public investment, accompanied by systematic training for experts directly involved in designing and evaluating projects in the region.

33. It is critical to develop and gather risk management instruments, strategies and good practices that have been implemented primarily at the local level, as well as to promote mechanisms combining scientific knowledge with the ancestral knowledge of peoples.

34. It is essential to continue supporting judicial and institutional modernization processes that ensure the viability of the policy approach, taking into account principles of security, safety, risk management, disaster management, safe recovery with transformation and reconstruction processes, and the need for an approach consistent with integrated environmental and water-resource management.

35. In light of the Central American Policy for Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management, the updating of the Regional Plan for Disaster Reduction, the preparation and updating of national plans, and the development and implementation of the strategies of SICA's specialized institutions and secretariats, are recommended.

36. Financial protection must be advanced through insurance mechanisms, fostering the development of both products and mechanisms for protection based on solidarity, aimed at covering social groups that are "not insurable."

37. Response capacity at the national and local levels must be promoted by using mechanisms for exchanging experiences and common learning at the regional level.

38. It is imperative to establish a follow-up and control system regarding policy implementation, in accordance with national systems and those mechanisms established at the Meetings of Presidents.

39. The Central American Policy for Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management must include a permanent consulting forum, in order to continue and consolidate this initiative and apply recommendations made at the Mitch +5 and Mitch +10 regional forums.