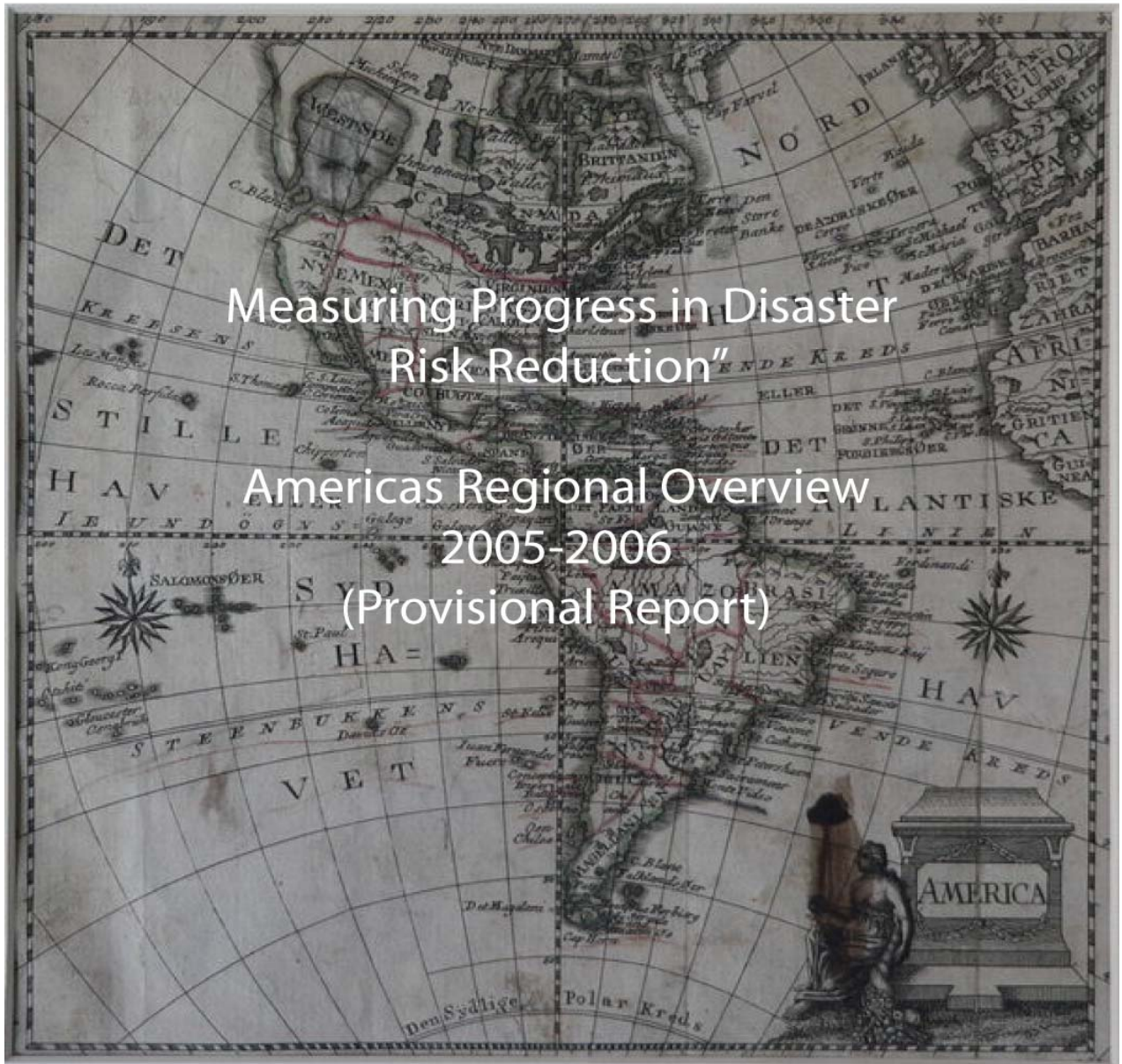




United Nations  
International Strategy for Disaster Reduction



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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

This report is a preliminary document prepared by the UN/ISDR Americas Unit as a contribution to the first session of the Global Platform for Disaster Reduction to be held in Geneva from 5-7 June, 2007.

The process to strengthen the ISDR system initiated by the Under Secretary General rapidly identified the important role that regional and sub-regional levels play in the field of disaster risk reduction and thus incorporated these as integral parts of the system. It is in this context that this report intends to become an initial input for the review and assessment of trends and progress in disaster risk reduction in countries and sub-regions of the Americas. This first draft needs to be consolidated and strengthened through a more systematic review and consultation process after the first session of the Global Platform, and in particular, during 2008.

The contents of the report are structured in order to provide an overall assessment of the disaster risk profile of the region which focuses on the period 2005-2006, as well as the progress and gaps in the implementation of the HFA priorities at the national level. There is a focus on regional/sub-regional initiatives, to reflect the existing mechanisms and the current institutional context of Latin America and the Caribbean to engage organically in the strengthened ISDR system through the development of a regional platform.

The report has drawn upon the national reports submitted by countries for the Global Platform session, as well as existing review and progress reports prepared by sub-regional expert organizations (Appendix 1 lists the report's most relevant sources and related web-sites).

## **II. SETTING THE SCENE**

The Americas encompass 35 sovereign nation states and 15 overseas territories and house approximately 14% of the human population in about 28% of the Earth's land surface (see Table # 1).

All nations states in the America's with the exception of Canada, the USA, and the overseas territories are developing countries. According to the human development aggregates (UNDP, 2006), 14 countries scored within the high human development group (Antigua and Barbuda; Argentina; Bahamas; Barbados; Canada; Chile; Costa Rica; Cuba; Mexico; Panama; Saint Kitts and Nevis; Trinidad and Tobago; United States and Uruguay); 20 countries are included in the medium human development group (Belize; Bolivia; Brazil; Colombia; Dominica; Dominican Republic; Ecuador; El Salvador; Grenada; Guatemala; Guyana; Honduras; Jamaica; Nicaragua; Paraguay; Peru; Saint Lucia; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; Suriname; and Venezuela). Only Haiti falls within the Least Development Countries (LDCs).






















All types of natural hazardous events occur in the Americas. From landslides to volcanic eruptions, from hurricanes to earthquakes, wildland fires, floods and drought, the Americas constitutes a multi-hazard scenario, where combined with

socio-economic and environmental vulnerable conditions, results in numerous and widespread small, medium and large disasters. In the last three decades alone, an estimated 160 million people in Latin America and the Caribbean were affected by disasters associated to the occurrence of natural hazards. In the last two years the region has witnessed a series of major disasters. The table # 2 summarizes occurrence and human and economic losses associated to natural hazards in the Americas for the period 2005-2006.

**Table 1: Countries of the Americas**

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| •  <u>Antigua and Barbuda</u> | •  <u>Dominica</u>           | •  <u>Panama</u>                           |
| •  <u>Argentina</u>           | •  <u>Dominican Republic</u> | •  <u>Paraguay</u>                         |
| •  <u>Bahamas</u>             | •  <u>Ecuador</u>            | •  <u>Peru</u>                             |
| •  <u>Barbados</u>            | •  <u>El Salvador</u>        | •  <u>Saint Kitts and Nevis</u>            |
| •  <u>Belize</u>              | •  <u>Grenada</u>            | •  <u>Saint Lucia</u>                      |
| •  <u>Bolivia</u>             | •  <u>Guatemala</u>          | •  <u>Saint Vincent and the Grenadines</u> |
| •  <u>Brazil</u>              | •  <u>Guyana</u>             | •  <u>Suriname</u>                         |
| •  <u>Canada</u>              | •  <u>Haiti</u>              | •  <u>Trinidad and Tobago</u>              |
| •  <u>Chile</u>               | •  <u>Honduras</u>           | •  <u>United States</u>                    |
| •  <u>Colombia</u>            | •  <u>Jamaica</u>            | •  <u>Uruguay</u>                          |
| •  <u>Costa Rica</u>          | •  <u>Mexico</u>             | •  <u>Venezuela</u>                       |
| •  <u>Cuba</u>               | •  <u>Nicaragua</u>         |  |

#### Dependencies and Overseas Territories

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| •  <u>Denmark</u>                   | •  <u>United Kingdom</u>             |
| ◦  <u>Greenland</u>                 | ◦  <u>Anguilla</u>                 |
| •  <u>France</u>                    | ◦  <u>Bermuda</u>                  |
| ◦  <u>Guadeloupe</u>                | ◦  <u>British Virgin Islands</u>   |
| ◦  <u>French Guiana</u>             | ◦  <u>Cayman Islands</u>           |
| ◦  <u>Martinique</u>                | ◦  <u>Falkland Islands</u>         |
| ◦  <u>Saint Pierre and Miquelon</u> | ◦  <u>Montserrat</u>               |
| •  <u>Netherlands</u>               | ◦  <u>Turks and Caicos Islands</u> |
| ◦  <u>Aruba</u>                     | •  <u>United States</u>              |
| ◦  <u>Netherlands Antilles</u>      | ◦  <u>Puerto Rico</u>              |
|  | ◦  <u>U.S. Virgin Islands</u>      |

The Hurricane season in 2005 broke all the records, including the tragic realization of the pre-announced disaster in New Orleans and adjacent vicinities. Just the hurricanes Katrina, Wilma and Rita in the US accounted for more than 166 billions US\$ of the total 210 billion US\$ economic losses worldwide. When assessing disaster economic losses as a percentage of the GDP, the severe floods in Guyana in 2006 positioned this country at the top worldwide, with a loss equivalent to 23% of its previous year's GDP<sup>1</sup>. Extensive floods were also seen in many countries of Central America and Bolivia -and as we write this report, Uruguay is being hit by its worst floods in 50 years. Tectonic hazards were also affecting the region,

<sup>1</sup> For additional information see "2006 Disasters in Numbers"  
<http://www.unisdr.org/eng/media-room>.

earthquakes in Chile and the violent eruptions of Vulcan Tungurahua, in Ecuador. These are a few examples for the period 2005-2006 that illustrate the high levels of hazard exposure and associated disaster risk that cohabit with people and communities in the Americas.

Table 2: Summary of disaster occurrence and losses for 2005-6 in the Americas

DISASTER OCCURRENCE BY MAJOR TYPES OF NATURAL HAZARDS			
Major types of natural disasters	2006	2005	2000-2004 Average
Geological	8	6	7
Floods & related	39	35	39.8
Droughts & related	11	12	19.8
Windstorms	17	45	31.6
total	75	98	97.8

NUMBER .OF PEOPLE AFFECTED BY MAJOR TYPES OF HAZARDS ASSOCIATED			
Major types of natural disasters	2006	2005	2000-2004 Average
Geological	332,997	33,120	482,604.4
Floods & related	818,570	1,034,416	821,877.4
Droughts & related	3,339	113,903	1,439,428.0
Windstorms	291,585	7,110,383	2,661,838.6
total	1,446,491	8,291,822	5,405,748.4

ECONOMIC DAMAGES BY MAJOR TYPES OF NATURAL DISASTERS (IN US\$ MILLION)			
Major types of natural disasters	2006	2005	2000-2004 Average
Geological	300	n.a.	1,005.7
Floods & related	1,938	1,424	1,362.5
Droughts & related	116	851	2,440.0
Windstorms	3,044	175,808	14,076.1
total	5,398	178,083	18,884.3

**Source:** EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database - [www.em-dat.net](http://www.em-dat.net) - Université Catholique de Louvain - Brussels - Belgium<sup>2</sup>

It is not only the big disasters that affect development patterns in the whole region but also a wide variety of medium and smaller-scaled disasters that occur every year throughout much of the region. The DesInventar<sup>3</sup> disaster database, with presence in 17 countries of the Americas and with up to 30 years of data, enables to systematic recording of more localized small-scale disasters. When analyzed, “these small and medium events represent a significant proportion of disaster in countries such as Panamá, only rarely affected by major hurricanes and earthquakes.” (*Reducing Disaster Risk: a Challenge for Development*. UNDP, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Extracted from the publication: "Annual Disaster Statistical Review: The trends and numbers 2006", CRED: Brussels, 2007.

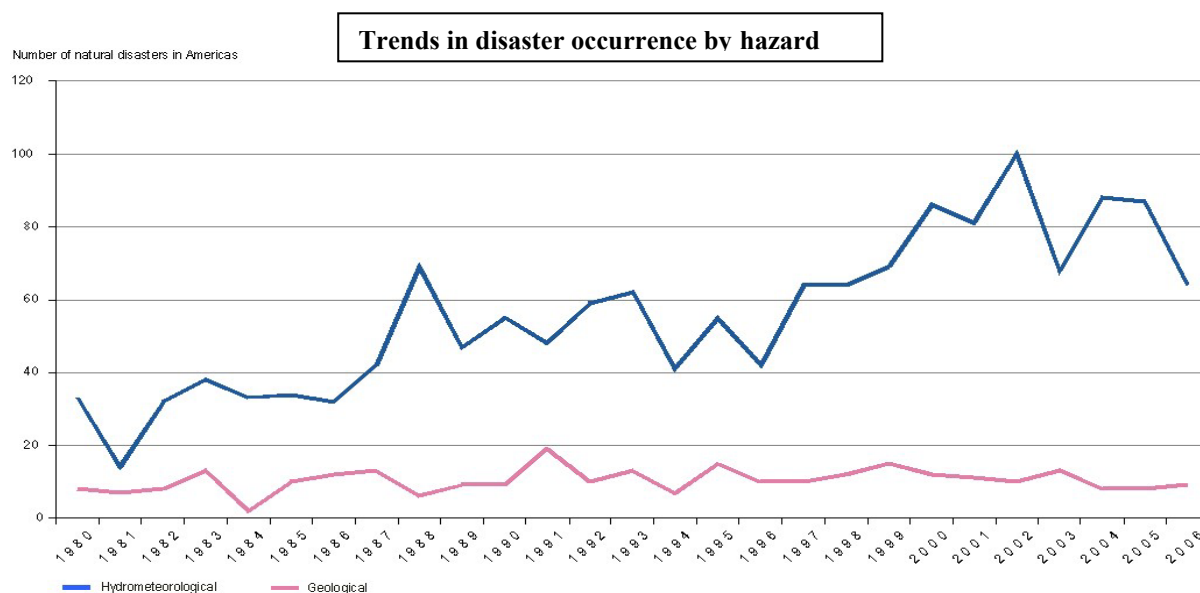
<sup>3</sup> Available on-line at [www.desenredando.com](http://www.desenredando.com)

The largest population growth worldwide will take place in urban areas, and currently, more than half of the world's population is already living in cities. This is particularly conspicuous for Latin America and the Caribbean, which has shown an increase in urban population from 42% in 1950, to 76% in 2000, with an expected 85% in 2030, the highest and most dramatic growth rates in comparison to other regions of the world.<sup>4</sup>

Rapid urbanization has been a dominant feature associated with increasing levels of disaster risk in many cities of the Americas. In instance, post –colonial population's growth has led to rapid expansion in populations-at risk from earthquakes. Mexico City and San Salvador are examples and the latter city remains so, despite being destroyed by earthquakes nine times between 1575 and 1986 (*Reducing Disaster Risk: a Challenge for Development*. UNDP, 2004)

The demographic figures for many of the major cities of the region, such as Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Lima-El Callao, Bogota, Santiago de Chile, Caracas, Santo Domingo, Havana, Quito, La Paz, Panama, Montevideo, San Jose, and Kingston, reinforce the urgency to approach urban risk as one of the main driving forces in shaping vulnerable scenarios in this region.

An estimated 240 million people live in countries exposed to tectonic hazards in the region. While these geological processes remain fairly constant, the dynamics of hydro meteorological process are changing (see figure below). Increasing tropical sea surface temperature globally will probably cause more intense storms in the future and may cause an increase in the number of intense windstorms and hurricanes.



**Source:** EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database - [www.em-dat.net](http://www.em-dat.net) - Université Catholique de Louvain - Brussels - Belgium"

<sup>4</sup> UN World Population Prospects, the 2006 revision, New York, 2007

The continual challenge of inadequate regulatory policies or effective implementation of existent controls, combined with inadequate urban and environmental management, and social inequality make Latin America – and many parts of the Caribbean too - the region with the World's greatest disparities between poor and rich. This adversely affects large segments of society who live in substandard conditions. Additionally, inadequate ecologically-oriented controls result in overexploited and damaged environment which adds to increasing social and environmental vulnerability in many parts of the region.

Environmental degradation is affecting the overall foundation for disaster risk resilience in the region. Almost 200,000 hectares of forest has been lost in the last 30 years in Latin America and the Caribbean. Over one quarter of Central America is affected by soil erosion, while South American figures in general are on the rise while currently totaling 14 %.

Summarizing, the Americas is a multi-hazard scenario where some dynamic and complex patterns of social, economic and environmental processes are worsening levels of disaster risk. In particular, population growth and rapid urbanization, environmental degradation, and climate change are current, and likely future, influences of immense challenge to disaster risk reduction in the Americas.

### **III. The regional and sub-regional context**

The 35 independent countries of the Americas are members of the Organization of American States (OAS). The OAS, through its Sustainable Development Department, has a longstanding history of supporting member states of the OAS in assessing their vulnerability to natural hazards and mitigating the effects of disasters, through different activities and resources that include technical assistance, training and technology transfer through intervention in development planning, project and policy formulation;

The Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR") of the OAS has been a member of the recently phased out Inter-Agency Task Force for the ISDR. The IACNDR act as the principal forum of the Inter-American System for analyzing issues related to natural and other disasters, including prevention and mitigation of their effects, in coordination with the governments of member states; competent national, regional, and international organizations; and non governmental organizations.

The Inter-American Program for Sustainable Development (2006-2009) takes into account, in particular, the areas related to systematic risk management. These include risk identification, risk reduction, and risk transfer, as well as the commitments assumed in the Hyogo Declaration and Hyogo Framework for Action, adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held in Kobe, Japan, in January, 2005.

The OAS has recently established the Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation (INDM) to support good governance-related activities in reducing the risk posed by natural hazards, by supporting on-going cooperation and collaboration among member states, multilateral and regional organizations in risk-reduction

programs, projects and strategies in the hemisphere, including the development of the Regional Platform of the Hyogo Framework for Action (see section VII).

### **Central America**

Established in 1988, the Coordinating Centre for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America, CEPREDENAC (<http://www.cepredenac.org>) is the specialized institution of the Central American Integration System (SICA) for natural disaster prevention, mitigation and response. The Governments of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama are active members, while Belize and Dominican Republic are in the process of becoming members. CEPREDENAC's inter-sectoral agenda is harmonized with other specialized regional entities in such areas as hydrological resources, agriculture, nutrition and food security.

The Regional Disaster Reduction Plan, PRRD, aims at contributing to disaster reduction as an integral part of the sustainability of Central American societies. The strategic objectives of the PRRD are: a) promoting the incorporation of disaster risk reduction in legislation, policies, plans and investment projects for sustainable development in the region; 2) enhancing and developing greater resilience of the population to disaster risk; and 3) promoting the incorporation of disaster risk analysis in the design and implementation of prevention, mitigation, response, recovery and reconstruction in the countries of the region (PRRD 2006-2015; see [www.](http://www.prrd.org)).

The first actions undertaken by the Executive Secretary of CEPREDENAC during 2006-2007 were focused on strengthening the institution and consolidating the inter-sectoral approach to disaster risk reduction, with a view of engaging in a more programmatic and strategic management.

One of the most challenges processes undertaken by CEPREDENAC in the last two years has been the review of the Regional Strategy for Disaster Reduction 2006-2015 (PRDD). The PRRD 2006-2015 is based on the Presidential Mandates and the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 and the proposal has been the result of a wide participative consultation process that took place in each country of the region through workshops and collective interviews. The whole process has revitalized the National Commissions of CEPRDENAC, allowing for the incorporation and ownership of more stakeholders in the multi-sectoral composition of these commissions.

The updating of the PRDD has helped CEPREDENAC and its members to focus on developing some sensitive and somehow forgotten areas, such as: a) the development of DRR performance indicators and its relation with sustainable development; b) vulnerability indicators; c) development of concept and methodological frameworks as well as an experts cadre for the treatment of urban risk; d) strengthening of capacities and mechanism for preparedness and response to emergencies; and e) national workshops for systematization of scientific and technical research in order to feed multiple and different users.

An executive summary of the latest version of the Disaster Reduction Regional Programme can be found as an annex in this regional report.

### ***The Caribbean***

The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency, CDERA, is the main specialized body in the disaster risk management in the Caribbean, with 16 participating states and headquartered in Barbados. CDERA also assists in capacity building and formulation of policy in disaster risk reduction and it is the implementing agency for the Comprehensive Disaster Management Project, CDM.

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) adopted (2001) a Strategy and Results Framework for the Comprehensive Disaster Management with the goal of linking the CDM to national development decision-making and planning. Five years after embracing the CDM against a background of recent global catastrophes, there is a recognized desire among disaster management stakeholders in the Caribbean to review the CDM achievements to date and revisit and sharpen its results focus, and to accelerate initiatives in promoting disaster risk and disaster loss reductions within the CDM in the Caribbean.

In the light of the outcomes of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction and the priorities identified by the Hyogo Framework for Action, and against the background of experiences in the region, CARICOM proposed to focus its programming around the critical actions needed to advance implementation of the five (5) Intermediate Results (IRs) of the 2001 CDM Strategy and Framework, which itself was also explicitly connected to the Bridgetown Programme of Action. Following review and participatory discussion the following thematic areas were selected for priority attention within CARICOM over the 2005-2015 period.

The Enhanced CDRM Framework which proposes four priority outcomes is based on three underpinning pillars: The Review and Assessment of the 2001 CDM Strategy and Framework; the global and regional disaster management agenda including the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015; and the CARICOM Regional Programming Framework. The Intermediate Results of the 2001 Framework have been incorporated in the relevant places so as to ensure continuity and deepening of the CDM process which began in 2001. The Enhanced Framework is designed toward achieving the overarching Goal of Sustainable Development in the Caribbean.

The outcomes have been informed by the need for a strategic shift toward a programming framework which will foster collaboration among development partners and other key players as well as harmonization among the many projects, programs and initiatives in DRM within the Region. The draft revised CDM Framework was presented for feedback and endorsement in principle from the key stakeholders at the inaugural CDM conference held December 11th-14th, 2006 in Barbados.

The revised CDRM framework will be presented to the Board of CDERA, to national stakeholders at the country level, and to COTED in CARICOM. National Disaster Management Policies are needed in all countries with the exception of BVI and St Lucia, and prioritization at the highest levels within each state is an essential

step. Development partners have undertaken to assess how the respective agencies can contribute to/support the CDRM process. Roles will need to be defined and institutional capacity for implementing/supporting CDRM within the respective agencies assessed.

A new proposal, “The Caribbean Platforms Programme” (CPP) was presented by UN/ISDR Americas during the 12th Meeting of the Special Committee on Natural Disasters of the Association of the Caribbean States (ACS), in August 2006. Building from the foundational work of the CDM, and sharing two of its main goals, the CPP directly targets to alleviate some of the regions long standing challenges hindering the realization of the most effective national and regional Disaster Risk Reduction. Additionally, it focuses on strengthening the structures and processes towards more integrative risk reduction, and furthering the mainstreaming of DRR into sustainable development planning and policies. Towards the realization of the most recent regional DRR declarations (Kingston 2005, Havana 2005,) as well as internationally accepted DRR and broader sustainable development frameworks, CPP is a highly practical and product oriented effort in affecting real and sustainable positive change in the Caribbean. Including participation with all countries in the Wider Caribbean, and operating in English, French and Spanish, this four-year programme in region-wide collaboration, builds directly upon past and on-going relevant initiatives, working in association with international and regional organizations and directly with national communities in multi-stakeholder and multi-sector –oriented activities in the areas of national assessments and capacity building, regional harmonization and collaboration, information standardization and information management, partnerships and networking, education training and knowledge development and exchange. Programme partners are ACS, CDERA, UNDP, and UN/ISDR.

The Association of the Caribbean States by mandate of its Member States is currently organizing a High Level Conference to exchange experiences, lessons learnt and best practices in the areas of natural disaster risk reduction, mitigation and recovery within the region, as well as determine areas of intra-regional co-operation in all three areas. The Conference will also examine the possibilities for expanding and strengthening regional mechanisms in the framework of the Agreement among the Member States and Associate Members of the Association of Caribbean States for Regional Co-operation in the Area of Natural Disasters, building on the Hyogo Framework for Action, the Kingston Declaration and the Havana Consensus, amongst others. The Conference is planned for November 2007 and Haiti has offered to host it. CDERA; UN/ISDR; UNDP; ECLAC; PAHO and IFRC are supporting the preparatory process in close collaboration with the ACS.

### ***The Andean Region***

The Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Relief, CAPRADE, it is the specialized body for disaster reduction in the countries belonging to the Andean Community (CAN). CAPRADE was created by decision of the Andean Committee of Ministries of Foreign Affairs, in 2002. CAPRADE’s objective is to contribute to the reduction of risk and the impact of natural and man-made disasters in the territories of the Andean sub-region through: political coordination and lobbying; strategy and planning; the promotion of disaster prevention; mitigation, preparedness relief and

reconstruction; as well as facilitating cooperation, mutual assistance and exchange of experience in this area. Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela are active members of this sub-regional body.

The Andean Strategy for Disaster Prevention and Relief, approved in June 2004, in Quito, is the main policy instrument for disaster reduction in this sub-region. The Andean Strategy has been the result of an intense work that gathered 280 entities and more than 450 national practitioners and experts in round tables and workshops, conducted in every member country. The main drivers of the national consultation have been the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Planning Ministry and the National Offices for Disaster Prevention of Relief. These three institutions are the core national representation within CAPRADE. The Andean Development Community (CAF), UNDP and UN/ISDR have accompanied closely and supported CAPRADE and their countries during this process.

The Andean Strategy has provided the context for the development of the Andean Strategic Plan 2005-2010; which is the technical and programmatic instrument for disaster reduction. The strategic goals set out in this plan take fully in consideration the Andean Strategy and Hyogo Framework for Action. The plan includes a detailed diagnosis of the current socio-economic and environmental context in the sub-region and a detailed matrix with strengths and gaps in the different thematic areas that relate to disaster risk reduction.

Among the key guidelines for this Andean Strategic Plan is explicitly addressed the promotion and strengthening of National Platforms / National Systems for DRR, highlighting the importance of the multisectoral and multistakeholder nature of these mechanisms. Another strategic action is the design and application of a new monitoring and evaluation system that will include the elaboration of a structured group of indicators and protocols for data gathering and compilation (see [http://www.caprade.org/plan\\_trab.htm](http://www.caprade.org/plan_trab.htm))

The project to support Prevention and Mitigation in the Andean Community, PREDECAN, subscribed by the European Union and the General Secretariat of the Andean Community, is in its last year of implementation. PREDECAN has conducted a thorough compilation and review of policy instruments for disaster prevention and relief aiming at harmonizing them within the context of the objectives of the Andean Strategy as well as the priorities set by the Hyogo Framework for Action. PREDECAN is fostering the incorporation of disaster risk analysis into planning and public investment processes in the subregion taking the lead in organizing regional workshops in this area. In the education arena, PREDECAN has formulated a Communicational Education Strategy for Risk Management in the Andean Community, in addition to several pilot projects being implemented in close collaboration with DIPECHO.

All Andean countries are members of the Ibero-American Association of Civil Defense and Civil Protection Organizations, with headquarters in Madrid. This organization has been very active and played a role in raising the profile of prevention and mitigation activities within the scope of civil defense and civil protection agencies in this subregion.

## ***The foundations for a Regional Platform***

During the Preliminary Consultation Meeting on the Global Platform June 29, Panama City, Panama, participants highlighted the importance of having multiple coordination mechanisms at both regional and sub-regional levels, as well as the relevance of linking them to, and framing them within, a regional platform, instead of creating new mechanisms, which would be confusing and counterproductive for the region. Along these lines, it was stated that intergovernmental sub-regional mechanisms, such as CEPREDENAC, CAPRADE, the ACS and CDERA, should become key components of the regional platform, in particular as exchange and follow-up mechanisms.

The OAS stressed the importance of having a regional platform, especially in order to link national efforts to the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action. The OAS announced an initiative that aims at creating an Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation (IANDM), and counts with the support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), arguing that this could become the most appropriate political arrangement in the hemisphere to further develop the idea of a regional platform, such as that proposed within the new ISDR system. The creation of this network is directly linked to the mandates and resolutions of the OAS General Assembly, as well as the process established by the Summits of the Americas.

The OAS delegate also highlighted the relevance of a number of mechanisms used by the OAS to convene hemispheric gatherings, at the ministerial level, in order to foster and secure the political commitment of governments to a number of areas related to disaster reduction. For instance, the Inter-American Strategic Plan for Policy on Vulnerability Reduction, risk Management and Disaster response (IASP) provides for a coordinating instrument within the Inter-American and the UN systems to support the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in the Americas, through the Regional and National Platforms.

Other participants mentioned the importance of fostering an interagency coordination group as part of the regional platform, such as RED-LAC in Panama, which, led by OCHA, has gained experience in issues related to disaster preparedness and response. In this context, some participants referred to the recent creation of a thematic sub-group on risk reduction, which could serve as the basis to establish a “soft” interagency coordination mechanism, in line with the regional platform and the processes undertaken by different countries for the implementation of the Hyogo Framework. With regard to the UN agencies, the participants pointed out that it is still challenging to internalize the need to work in a coordinated manner and build more synergies, beyond particular or individual agendas.

Many participants agreed that the main tasks of a potential regional platform should include: a) promoting the exchange of experience and information in the region (which should also include virtual exchange platforms); b) registering / monitoring the progress made in the field of disaster reduction (baseline studies and reports, such as “Living with Risk”); and, c) developing materials and guidelines in order to provide guidance to different sectors, support the creation of national

platforms / multi-sectoral mechanisms, and use existing guides to assist countries in their CCA-UNDAF processes.

Based on the encouraging feedback received during the preliminary regional consultation for the Global Platform meeting in Panama in June 2006, UN/ISDR Americas and OAS have been working on a MoU which is expected to be signed at the first session of the Global Platform meeting in June 2007. This MoU covers several substantive inter-institutional regional cooperation initiatives on both a political and technical level and as such will make it much easier to build a UN/ISDR-coordinated regional platform with support from OAS.

It is important to underscore that since this regional consultation, the OAS has convened the first meeting of the INDM in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, in December 2006. Similarly, the RED-LAC mechanism and its group on disaster reduction has furthered a plan of action that includes coordinated efforts to support the development of the regional platform.

In short, the region is experiencing a significant evolution in the inter-institutional synergies and seems to be ready to engage in the development of a regional platform that should be an integral part of the ISDR system.

#### **IV. Progress on HFA implementation at the national level**

While the Hyogo Framework for Action was adopted by all governments from the Americas in January 2005, the internalization of the document and its priorities by national disaster risk agencies and practitioners took some time. In the same fashion, an intensive advocacy work undertaken by UN/ISDR Americas and its close partners, was necessary to begin to receive the official designations of HFA national focal points (first commitment of the states with the HFA). At the time this report was written, the UN/ISDR secretariat received more 27 formal designations. In many cases, the designated HFA focal points are different from the previous national focal points, and reflect a change in the understanding of the responsibilities implied in addressing disaster reduction issues - moving away from a more limited notion focused just on disaster response and relief.

As briefly summarized in the previous section, a relatively intense period of review and update has been undertaken by regional and sub-regional mechanisms associated to disaster risk reduction in the Americas. These processes have been timely informed by the outputs of the Hyogo Framework for Action. This is an important point when assessing the “relatively” slow reaction from countries to the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action. In that sense, a considerable number of countries have been involved in reshaping its regional policies and frameworks during 2006 and 2007. We can say that national implementation is the next step, with the added value that this implementation is guided by sound and harmonized regional and international policy frameworks (HFA being the global one).

Another element to take into account is the fact that 2005 and 2006 have national electoral years in 17 countries in the region. For instance, in Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Mexico are new authorities and as it many areas, the dialogue on disaster risk reduction has to be nurtured again.

As seen in the Andean, Caribbean and Central American examples, countries have been engaged in multi-stakeholder dialogue to establish and/or strengthen the foundations of disaster risk reduction. Many countries have revised and updated their policy and strategic plans to further implement DRR in their countries. While, in most cases, these dialogues have not crystallized the establishment or identification of national platforms/ national systems, there are good policy frameworks in place for many countries to move forward in that direction. Box1 illustrates some of the national progress made in institutional and legislative frameworks in the region.

### **Box 1: “Making Disaster Risk a Priority”**

**Panamá** launched at the end of 2006, its National Platform for Disaster Reduction, building upon the existing but rather dormant National Commission for CEPREDENAC. With more than a dozen ministries represented in addition to the academic sector, this national platform has already met twice this year and is actively working on a strategic plan of action. **Peru, Venezuela** and **Argentina** are working since last year on the development of their National Platforms and expect to have them formally established before the end of 2007. The National Platform in **Costa Rica** has been instrumental in incorporating DRR strategic actions into the National Development Plan; developed a National Risk Management Plan, and worked in the reorganization of the National Risk Prevention Commission. **USA** also formed of its National Platform in 2005, under the coordination of the Subcommittee for Disaster Reduction. Besides its well oiled national system, **Colombia** keeps continuously strengthening the local institutional and legislative basis for disaster risk reduction, with Bogota being an outstanding example of making DRR a priority.

**Honduras** has been working throughout 2006 on a new law for the establishment of a disaster risk national system that harmonizes the sub-national and national levels, and designates specific responsibilities for prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, early recovery and reconstruction to different entities. The Cayman Islands are engaged in the development of a national strategic framework to guide risk reduction, based on HFA priorities, and have also launched (January 2007) a new specialized agency: Hazard Management Cayman Islands.

**El Salvador** has adopted a new law for Civil Defense, Prevention and Disaster Mitigation as well as the Civil Defense, Prevention and Disaster Mitigation Fund. In addition, the National Land Use Survey (SNET) has developed as set of governmental indicators for monitoring DRR. **In Haiti**, a draft decree for a new legal DRR framework has been submitted while, **Saint Lucia** has updated its Disaster Management policy and the **Turks**

Most countries have reported progress in identifying, assessing and monitoring and enhancing early warning. It is worth mentioning that regional initiatives related to the development of risk indicators –such as the Inter American Development Bank<sup>5</sup>- as well as methodologies to assess potential disaster losses –such as the World Bank CAPRA<sup>6</sup>- are contributing substantially to a better systematization of the primary hazard and vulnerability primary data that feed risk analysis and evaluation processes in the countries. That example also illustrates advancement in the countries aiming at tailoring down the disaster risk information to key users from the economic and financial sectors, whereas in the past, the tendency have been more a supply-driven data production.

In terms of early warning there is some progress reported for the enhancement of floods and seismic hazards. It is perceived that a multi-hazard approach is still needed in many countries, especially with the efforts that are

<sup>5</sup>For more information please visit <http://idbdocs.iadb.org/wsdocs/getdocument.aspx?docnum=647223>

<sup>6</sup>For more information please visit

currently going to Tsunami-focused EWS. Also, a “people-centered” focus in DRR is still a major advocacy challenge in the realm of early warning systems for many countries in the region. Box 2 highlights some country examples gathered from national progress reports and specialized publications.

### **Box 2: Some examples of risk assessment and early warning**

In the **Cayman Islands** a good early warning system for hurricanes already exists and a seismic monitoring network is currently being established for the islands. It is expected that the country will be apart of the Caribbean Tsunami Warning System when the monitoring network becomes operational. In addition to this, an evaluation exercise for every property on Grand Cayman has been completed and a storm surge mapping of the country is in process. With the use of Geographic Systems Technology, a combination of storm surge mapping and evaluations will allow the forecasting of the storm surge impact, as well as allow loss estimations. Eventually, there may also be individual property risk definition capabilities.

**Costa Rica** has improved its Emergency Information System equipment using GIS, GPS and remote sensing technology to geo-reference natural and technological threats. The system allows transformation of geo-referenced risk data into digital formats to support the decision making and land use planning. They are developing and updating a GIS at the national level, allowing for thematic maps of 1:50.000, 1:25.000, and 1:10.000 scales. They now have Early Alert Systems monitoring of any potential threats to their national territory. Further to this, they have alert and activation protocols between the CNE and the research institutes and have organized the population under the humanitarian networks concept for monitoring and alerts. There are now eight systems and 300 radio positions. Protocols have been signed and are currently in operation with scientific institutions. Twelve of the 32 river basins of the country are being watched along with organized groups ready to respond to any floods.

**El Salvador** has progresses in data compilation and analysis for the construction of several indexes including: Index of Disaster Deficit (IDD); Local index of Disaster (IDL); Index of Prevailing Vulnerability (IVP); Index of Risk Management (IGR) of risk. **Haiti** has created a methodology for the production of local flood hazard maps in support of the UTSIG (Ministry of Planning). As a result, two pilot maps have been produced and a proposal was presented for the extension of this initiative to the whole country. The authorities requested the support for the installation of DESINVENTAR in Haiti for the development of a disaster database. Two pilot Flood Early Warning Systems are being installed in *Fonds-Verrettes* and *Camp Perrin* areas. Concurrently, support is being provided for the design of a National Early Warning System. These events will feed into the implementation of a broader project involving the installation of EWS throughout the country (funded by the IADB).

**St. Lucia** has a flood early warning system linked already to existing National Evacuation Protocols and Risk Analysis procedures that measure levels of threat. The **Turks and Caicos Islands** has developed an early warning system for tsunamis. This initiative involves the installation of a seismic monitoring station by the United States Geological Survey as part of the regional project for the Atlantic and Caribbean.

*(Extracted from country progress reports submitted for the Global Platform)*

In the area of knowledge, innovation and education, one of the outstanding issues reported by countries is the active engagement in the global campaign 2006-7 disaster reduction begins at school. Governments, communities and individuals in high-risk countries throughout the region have been actively raising awareness of the need to integrate disaster risk reduction into the school curricula, and that schools buildings are retrofitted. From systematic compilation of educational material, to political commitment of Ministries of Education, to successful communication and resource mobilization strategies, the objectives of the world campaign have found a

very fertile response in the countries of the Americas<sup>7</sup>. Many countries have also reported progress in training and awareness material, mostly related to seismic risk and the Hurricane Season. Box 3 includes some examples extracted from the country reports for priority three of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

**Box 3: Some examples of “Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels”**

**In 2006, the Cayman Islands** organized its first *Earthquake Awareness Day* on the anniversary of the December earthquake of 2004. The day was used to increase awareness of the seismic hazard and precautionary measures which can be taken for protection of life and property. Moreover, Cayman has a long standing public awareness programme for hurricanes. This programme includes brochures, booklets, use of the electronic media with a novel effort in 2005 which included materials and activities specifically targeting for 10 – 14 year-olds. In the **British Virgin Islands**, the Department of Disaster Management has a far-reaching Public Information & Education, Training and Research Programme with a formal Associates of Science Degree in Disaster Management available at the local college, HLSCC. The BVI’s new focus is on building capacity among the formal and informal construction sector by targeting architects, contractors and engineers. In 2005, **Haiti** launched an awareness campaign for the Hurricane Season, which includes the use of radio spots and posters.

**Panama’s** “*Rain is the source of life*” program consists of the placement of ten rain gauges in schools affected by floods in Panama. The activity aims to develop a more holistic understanding for boys and girls of fifth and sixth grades (primary) of their environment, and to appreciate the interconnectedness between them and the natural world around them. In order to create conscience in the community and, as well, to inform and to create conscience of the natural resources in our global community, a new magazine: “World-wide Meteorological Day” has been created, which will be distributed in the Newspaper “Panama America”.

The Department of Disaster Management and Emergencies of the **Turks and Caicos Islands** is currently testing its website. The website is intended to make information on disaster management in the Turks and Caicos accessible to all sectors throughout the islands and outside of Turks and Caicos. The department is currently receiving feedback on the site to make the necessary improvements before it is launched. The Meteorological Department of the Government of the **Bahamas** is responsible for providing hurricane advisories for the **Turks and Caicos Islands** and the meteorological department has been approached and has agreed to provide a meteorological officer to make presentations in the **Turks and Caicos Islands**. Presentations are scheduled for schools, community groups and on television. The initiative will introduce community preparedness planning to the **Turks and Caicos Islands** to build capacity in risk reduction at the community level. Training sessions will be held with communities dealing with hazards and vulnerability, planning to prepare for, respond to and recover from, those hazards.

**Chile** has developed a new Cooperation framework between the Metropolitan University of Educational Sciences (UMCE, main training university for educators) and the Disaster Management Office, ONEMI; to form a strategic alliance aiming at the development of a culture of the prevention. A new collaborative effort between the UN/ISDR, and the **University for Peace** (UPEACE), located in **Costa Rica**, includes the incorporation of a new course focused on DRR into UPEACE ongoing Masters Programmes in Environment, Peace and Security. UN/ISDR with World Bank financial support will collaborate with UPEACE through technical advisory, human resources and other in-kind support for the design, conduction and evaluation of this course that will result in 25 targeted regional and international students acquiring solid basis in DRR issues and expanding the pool of skilled practitioners.

*(Extracted from country progress reports submitted for the Global Platform)*

<sup>7</sup> For additional information please visit [www.unisdr.org](http://www.unisdr.org).

Countries have reported different levels of progress and gaps in reducing the underlying risk factors. Recent regional diagnosis – such as the one done for the Andean Strategic Plan- revealed a weak articulation between poverty reduction strategies and disaster risk reduction initiatives in the analyzed countries. On the other hand, some countries have advanced the implementation of risk reduction in key sectors, and in some cases, such as El Salvador, this progress has included the developing of performance risk indicator by sectors. There is also progress in integrating disaster reduction and climate change in the region as well as promoting financial risk sharing mechanisms. The incorporation of DRR criteria into planning tools such as the CCA-UNDAF is slowly progressing –the recently released guidelines are expected to play an important role in countries entering the CCA-UNDAF process (Honduras, for instance, has incorporated DRR within the environmental priority identified for its CCA-UNDAF).

In terms of protection of the critical facilities, as it was described previously, the global campaign in the region has helped to center the focus on safe schools, and there are many countries where pilot project with schools retrofitting components are being implemented in the region. The same impact is expected with the forthcoming global campaign on safe hospitals. Some countries in the region still provide strong examples of how land use planning is indeed a major tool for disaster risk reduction (Colombia and El Salvador are among these good examples). Still the increasing environmental degradation and non-planned patterns of urbanization support the notion that there is a lot of ground to cover on this topic.

**Box 4: Some examples of “Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels”**

**The Cayman Islands** upgraded their building codes after Hurricane Ivan in 2004. Every damaged structure had to be inspected and approved during reconstruction. Inspection of new buildings is now compulsory and strictly enforced. As well, the National Development Plan is now under review, a process which includes public, as well as technical, inputs. Emergency shelters are being built to withstand Category 5 storms and are equipped with emergency power and water. Concurrently, a national assessment of living conditions is being undertaken. This will provide valuable data on vulnerability factors related to economic issues among the lower-income population. Legislation to further protect the environment is being reviewed, and the disaster-related legislation should also address issues related to protection and preservation of wetlands and other natural coastal features (which reduce the risk of coastal flooding).

In **Costa Rica** there are several initiatives that are worth highlighting within the realm of priority four of the HFA. Municipalities have actively engaged in the identification of risk threats in the context of the development of the land use plans and municipal laws. They also were subject to field inspections to validate the risk data as well as risk evaluations of sites with recurrent emergencies where adjustments to regulation of the urban development were required. In addition, DRR has been incorporated in the Social Chapter of Poverty Eradication and it has become an integral part of the National Development Plan. DRR measures have been articulated with the application of the environmental norms and law initiatives related to global conventions for the climatic change. A preliminary diagnosis has been furthered to secure public infrastructure and investments through an insurance program, in close collaboration with the National Insurance Institute and with funds from the Costa Rican National Platform.

*(Extracted from country progress reports submitted for the Global Platform)*

The preparedness and response mechanisms of many countries in the region have been tested during the occurrence of intense natural hazards during 2005 and 2006. Some countries have performed fairly well while others have revealed that preparedness and response still need to be strengthened, especially in terms of assessing disaster preparedness and response capacities and mechanisms, and ensuring that early warning systems are properly linked to response systems. There progress reported in the areas of preparedness with focus on sectors, such the cases of Ecuador and Colombia, where a health training program to prepare for volcanic eruptions is being implemented<sup>8</sup>.

**Box 5: Some examples of “Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective disaster”**

The **British Virgin Island’s** Department of Disaster Management (DDM) programme has been tested and the response efforts have been effective; plans and procedures are tested on an annual basis. In addition, the BVI through the work of the DDM has undertaken an extensive public awareness campaign held annually which uses the yearly theme established by the ISDR.

**Chile** has created specialized Task Force Units to support the work of municipalities and provinces on disaster preparedness and emergency operations, with a focus on enforcement of early warning protocols, emergency controls and rehabilitation of affected areas.

In **Cayman Islands**, the National Hurricane Plan is updated in yearly basis. The Cayman Islands Red Cross has a community preparedness programme which trains community response teams. These teams will be integrated into the national response system. Increasing national preparedness and response capacity is a continual process which includes ensuring availability of emergency equipment for first responders and emergency management agencies, maintaining a functioning emergency telecommunications system, development of plans, including Continuity of Operations plans for Government, drills and exercises and training. One major incident exercise has already been completed in 2007 and another is planned for May. .

**Costa Rica** has introduced a new article of the Costa Rican Emergency National law n. 8488 that allows the use of the National Emergency Fund for local emergencies). Then, a 9-1-1 call emergencies system has been established to coordinate the work of the disaster emergency institutions. Costa Rica has built and equipped a new a new building for Operations Center of Emergencies (OCE).

In **Haiti**, the Direction of the Civil Protection has developed a National Action Plan for 2005 Hurricane Season which was tested, together with the UN inter agency contingency plan, during two simulation exercise conducted end of May/early June 2005. In **Turks and Caicos Islands** a pilot project has been launched in two communities to establish community disaster groups to build structures for disaster preparedness and response, and identify community leaders, select pilot communities, define group composition, conduct training for group

*(Extracted from country progress reports submitted for the Global Platform)*

The above is just a brief overview of progress in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework achieved by countries in the Americas. A detailed country by country matrix on progress and gaps in HFA implementation, based on country

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<sup>8</sup> For further information please see UN/ISDR Informs, Disaster Reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean, Issue 12, 2006, p57 (available on-line in [www.eird.org](http://www.eird.org))

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12. Panama (2007)
13. Paraguay (2007)
14. St. Kitts and Nevis (2007)
15. Saint Lucia, (2007)
16. USA (2007)
17. Turks and Caycos (2007)

(\*These country reports arrived when the drafting of this report was almost finished and therefore are not reflected fully in the contents of the current document)

## VII. LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACS	Association of Caribbean States
BCPR	Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recover
CAF	Andean Development Community
CAN	Andean Community
CAPRADE	Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Relief
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CDERA	Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response
CEPREDENAC	Center of Coordination for the Prevention of the Natural Disasters in Central America
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
COTED	Council for Trade and Economic Development
CPP	Caribbean Platforms Programme
DIPECHO	Disaster Preparedness European Community Host Organization
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and Caribbean
FLACSO	Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
IACNDR	Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction
IANDM	Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation
IASP	Inter-American Strategic Plan for Policy on Vulnerability Reduction, Risk Management and Disaster Response
IFRC	International Federation Red Cross
INDM	Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation
ISDR	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
OAS	Organization of American States
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECS	Secretariat of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PREDECAN	Prevention and Mitigation in the Andean Community, Regional Disaster Reduction Plan
PRRD	Regional Disaster Reduction Plan
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WFP	World Food Programme



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