

Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas

Country Declaration on Behalf of Canada

Mr. Chair, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen; on behalf of the Government of Canada, I would like to extend my thanks to the Government of Ecuador for hosting this important event and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction for convening this Platform.

We are all aware that millions of people are affected by natural disasters every year, and the impact can be catastrophic. From the loss of lives, homes and livelihoods, to the destruction of buildings and trade infrastructure, natural disasters can devastate entire countries overnight. Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines is a sobering example.

In Canada, the occurrence and cost of natural disasters is trending up-ward. Recently, our Government allocated \$4 billion in disaster assistance. During 2013, Canada witnessed two significant events: the Lac Mégantic train derailment and explosion resulting in a tragic loss of life and property, and the extreme flooding in southern Alberta.

Strengthening the resilience of communities to disasters continues to be a priority for Canada, both domestically and internationally. Our Government takes a comprehensive approach to disaster risk reduction and building resilience, recognizing that reducing and mitigating risks and vulnerabilities is far more effective than responding after the fact.

Domestically, Canada is committed to advancing disaster prevention and mitigation and is working with provinces, territories and municipalities to build safer and more resilient communities. Canada is developing a National Disaster Mitigation Program which will provide \$200 million over five years to build the foundation for risk-informed and cost effective mitigation investments. Furthermore, a \$14-billion New Building Canada Fund, announced in 2014, includes a project category focusing on structural disaster mitigation infrastructure. These investments signal Canada's commitment to shift from a costly response/recovery approach to a risk-based pro-active prevention/mitigation approach to disaster management.

The health and safety of First Nations in Canada living on reserves is a priority. Canada is strengthening disaster management support to First Nations by providing dedicated funding for emergency response and recovery and emergency preparedness activities. Furthermore, Canada has introduced a \$40 million program over five years for disaster mitigation initiatives on reserves.

To further reduce risk, Canada will also be consulting with the insurance industry, provinces and territories and other stakeholders to explore options for a national approach to residential flood insurance.

Many of these conversations are taking place in our National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. Since 2010, Canada's Platform has held an Annual Roundtable on Disaster Risk Reduction to engage all sectors of society and individual Canadians on ways to foster disaster risk reduction.

Last year's Roundtable theme was 'Building Blocks of Resilience: Local, National and Global Perspectives', and included discussions on issues such as: climate change adaptation; land use planning; risk assessment; and aboriginal resilience.

Canada recognizes that, to address the impact of a changing climate, financial and technical assistance needs to be provided for supporting international initiatives and programs. Through engagement in multiple international climate-related initiatives, Canada supports policy-relevant science, research, and capacity building to enable sound adaptation investment decisions in vulnerable countries and sectors, as well as at home. To that effect, Canada has provided \$1.2 billion under "UNFCCC Fast Start Finance" from 2010 to 2013, which includes significant support to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in developing countries.

Furthermore, through our leadership in advancing the Global Framework for Climate Services under the auspices of the World Meteorological Organization, Canada contributes to ensuring that nations and communities have equal access to climate-science information and services essential to support natural disaster risk reduction.

In keeping with our commitments in the *Hyogo Framework for Action*, Canada continues to support local and international efforts to build the resilience of individuals, communities, and countries to plan for and mitigate the effects of external shocks, including natural disasters. We are committed to strengthening the resilience of women and children, which we do in part through our efforts on nutrition and food security and as part of the Muskoka Initiative on Newborn and Child Health. Within the Americas through bilateral and multilateral programs, Canada remains a strong supporter of disaster risk reduction.

At the same time, Canada works to strengthen the preparedness efforts of the international humanitarian system. Through our Strategic Partnership with the Canadian Red Cross, Canada is helping to build resilience in the Americas and Africa by enhancing the emergency response capacity of local National Red Cross Societies.

Our support to the Pan American Health Organization's Programme for Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Relief works to assist national health authorities in Central and South America and as well as the Caribbean, to reduce the risk of, and better prepare for, disasters.

This 2014 Americas Regional Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction provides an opportunity to exchange ideas, and best practices which will inform our collective ways forward, both nationally and internationally. The Regional Platform also provides a forum to prepare for Hyogo II discussions.

There have been both successes and gaps in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

A clear success is the overall downward trend in mortality risk from disasters, due to enhanced capacities in early warning, preparedness, and response to disasters. Less positive is the overall increase in the costs incurred by disasters. As such, all nations need to expend effort in addressing risks and supporting response to disasters in order to reverse the rising economic costs. Canada has extensive international experience in engaging the private sector and the use of financial tools for effectively responding to disasters, tools which also can support effective risk reduction. By working together with our many traditional and private sector partners, the risk transfer and insurance facility that has been developed in the Caribbean and extended to Central American countries is a model that a number of other regions are emulating.

Going forward Canada would like to see a Hyogo II framework that is pragmatic, action-oriented and measurable, and emphasizes the key role of prevention and mitigation in building resilient communities.

In closing, I would like to reiterate the importance Canada attaches to this forum and the key issues discussed here. As Canada continues to make progress in meeting our Hyogo commitments, we are seeing the benefits of adopting an inclusive and participatory approach to advancing disaster risk reduction through initiatives like our National Platform and investments in disaster mitigation. With less than a year before we are tasked with finalizing an effective international agreement on disaster risk reduction, Canada will continue to work with all stakeholders and partners to achieve an agreement that builds resilience to natural disasters across the globe in nations and communities.

Thank you.