

IV Session  
Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas  
*Country Declaration on behalf of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana*

May 2014

The delegation from the Co-operative Republic of Guyana to the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas, on behalf of the Government of Guyana, would like to thank the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction for its leadership in the last 10 years, and the Government of Ecuador for hosting this meeting.

We would also like to congratulate the people and the Government of Ecuador for the outstanding progress made in Disaster Risk Management and in recognizing the Rights of Nature and Mother Earth. These measures will undoubtedly reduce vulnerability, enhance empowerment and contribute to a more resilient society in Ecuador.

In 2005 the Hyogo Framework for Action was established. As if by coincidence that same year the most destructive floods in the last 100 years of Guyana's History hit our coastal areas. These events had an economic impact of 60% of the National GDP, and while not having caused many deaths, they affected more than 50% of the total population, one third of them being children under 9, and caused disruption of livelihoods, medical outbreaks, and an important psycho-social impact. We are very thankful for the International aid received for this impact.

We recognize that while hazards can be natural, the underlying factors of vulnerability are quite often man-made, and therefore avoidable.

Based on that, the Government of Guyana has made a significant effort to reduce poverty and inequality, assure universal education, strengthen the health system and provide universal access to HIV/AIDS diagnosis and treatment, ameliorate land planning, mainstream Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), build more resilient infrastructures and communications, shift to more ecofriendly mining practices, avoid land degradation and deforestation, diversify crops, and to develop a low carbon economy with a climate change adaptation and mitigation approach, taking into consideration the unique characteristics of Guyana's diverse society, and the different contributions and needs of indigenous people, women, the elderly, the differently abled and the poor.

The Government of Guyana has made significant progress in building a more resilient society; improving knowledge about hazards, vulnerability and risks; developing more resilient infrastructures with attention to Climate Change; and building up its preparedness and response capacities.

On the other hand, we observe that the prevention, adaptation and mitigation measures by all sectors and levels of government have been weakly coordinated, resulting in limited efficiency. Most communities respond to disasters on their own, through self-help measures and reliance on their own capacities. These capacities would be insufficient in the case of major disasters, and therefore it is mandatory to better promote community-centered initiatives implemented by all sectors. To this end we are now working with the administrative regions of Guyana and the communities within those regions in building their resilience.

We believe that integration of Disaster Risk Reduction, Development and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation is the most cost-effective way of reducing disaster risk, and we recognize the necessity of implementing such programs at the national and local level based on good, accurate, and timely scientific information and analysis, incorporating present and future accumulated risks, and guiding private and public planning and investment.

In that regard, the Government of Guyana supports the integration of the Climate Change and the post-2015 Development agendas and goals into a broader risk management strategy.

The Government of Guyana adopts without reservation the Hyogo Framework for Action and the Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy, and is committed to participate to a full extent in the development of a post-2015 framework, as well as to enhance international cooperation with CARICOM, CDEMA, UNASUR and neighbouring countries for assessing and managing trans-boundary risks.

The Government of Guyana is involved in reforming its Disaster Risk Reduction / Comprehensive Disaster Management legal framework, including a comprehensive reform process of the Civil Defence Commission. This gives us the opportunity to enhance capacities and efficiency in the Civil Defence Commission itself and to increase participation of the public, private, and civil sectors and academia through the establishment of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Platform.

In the words of the National Emergency Coordinator and Head of the Presidential Secretariat, Dr. Luncheon: *"Our comprehensive approach to addressing particular hazards encompass not how well we respond to a disaster event, but how organized we are in putting into play policies and guidelines in disaster management"*. To this end, in the past three years the following was established with support from our development partners:

1. Disaster Risk Management Strategy.
2. National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy.
3. Disaster Risk Management Bill.
4. Integrated Disaster Risk Management Plan and Implementation Strategy.
5. Multi-hazard Disaster and Response Plan.
6. Early Warning System Framework.
7. Civil Defence Commission Strategy.
8. Establishment of Volunteer Programme.
9. Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis Framework, Policy and Plan.
10. National Public Education Campaign.
11. DRM Sectoral Guidelines.
12. Community Based Disaster Risk Management Project.
13. Risk Reduction Management Centre.

As I speak with you we are in the process of completing our Alternate Emergency Operations Centre.

We are committed to collaborate more closely and effectively to coordinate our efforts on integration of Disaster Risk Management in all sectors, improving human resources and building capacity for disaster risk reduction, preparedness, relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and resettlement.

We would also like to thank the extraordinary assistance provided by alliances with CDEMA, CARICOM, UNASUR, EU, USA, Japan, OAS, IDB, US-SOUTHCOM and the UN Agencies.

Once again we must thank the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Government and People of Ecuador for this opportunity.