International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Declaration
Fifth Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction
Montreal - 2017

The Red Cross acknowledges that Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is a key component in generating safer and more resilient communities.

In the Americas, we continue to lose human lives and livelihoods due to disasters, thus preventing families and communities to come out of poverty and increasing their vulnerability.

Through our continental, national and local humanitarian network, National Societies in the Americas maintain their strong commitment to continue working on reducing vulnerabilities and building community and institutional resilience, and reaffirm their commitment to comply with the Sendai Framework, which promotes the link with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement. Considering that the Red Cross defines resilience as "the ability of individuals, communities, organizations or countries exposed to disasters, crises and underlying vulnerabilities to anticipate, prepare for, reduce the impact of, cope with and recover from the effects of shocks and stresses without compromising their long-term prospects."[1]

We call upon the States in the Americas and commit ourselves, as the IFRC, to work with the 35 National Societies in the region in the fulfillment of the following objectives:

One: To emphasize the relevance of individual and community awareness and participation so that they assume a leadership role in working towards resilience, and become agents of change towards achieving healthy and safe lives.

> ➢ **We acknowledge that understanding risk is critical to building community resilience.**

> ➢ We call for an ***explicit recognition of the role played by local communities***, volunteers and civil society organizations not only as first responders in a crisis, but also for their **ability to make important contributions to DRR**.

> ➢ The **recruitment of community volunteers**, particularly in informal urban and suburban communities, is imperative; hence, we urge the authorities to **actively promote and support volunteers** in order to capitalize on the potential that these agents of change provide in their communities.

> ➢ **The health and well-being of individuals and communities is an essential factor in reducing their vulnerabilities and increasing their resilience.**

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[1] IFRC Framework for Community Resilience.

Two: The strengthening Local Disaster Risk Management Systems is an essential priority to ensure sustainable development.

➢ Local authorities play a **key role** in risk management and therefore **must have** the technical, financial, and political support to be able to fully perform this role.

➢ As auxiliaries to public authorities in the humanitarian field, Red Cross National Societies, with a territorial scope of **over seven hundred thousand volunteers**, are committed to joining efforts in developing local risk management and promoting a community resilience approach.

Three: To advocate for awareness and actions to address the impact of recurrent, minor-scale daily hazards.

➢ In the Americas, *silent disasters **are responsible for most of the losses of human lives and livelihoods***. These silent disasters go unnoticed because they are constant, and tend to be underreported and under-estimated.

➢ In this regard, we aim to support national and sub-regional disaster risk management systems, as auxiliaries to public authorities, in **advocating for the increased visibility of the impact of these disasters**, the losses, and the resulting increase in local vulnerability.

Four: To prioritize people and communities in situations of vulnerability and greater risk.

➢ The number of vulnerable, disadvantaged or marginalized social groups reaches one billion people globally, along with millions of new migrants, refugees and displaced persons, who **are considerably more exposed** to the impact of disasters.

➢ DRR strategies must prioritize actions **based on the needs of people** living with high risk, particularly those living in geographically remote locations, in areas affected by insecurity and conflict, migrant populations, those affected by the impacts of climate change and those living in conditions of urban overpopulation.

➢ **Promoting social inclusion** and fighting against xenophobia and discrimination is crucial as is **increasing the participation and empowerment** of indigenous populations, racial minorities, women, LGTBI persons, as well as people with disabilities, children, youth, and the elderly, in building community resilience.

Five: To drive forth education, capacity building and awareness for the promotion of a DRR approach that includes all sectors of society.

➢ It is essential to **promote education and capacity building at all levels** and sectors through innovative learning tools, both in-person and online, in order to achieve **universal access to risk reduction education**.

➢ Individual and community education is crucial to reduce vulnerability; we advocate for a *culture of safety and resilience based on key messages* adapted to local and cultural realities, as well as ancestral practices, that contribute to a better understanding of risks.

➢ We urge government and non-government actors to adopt and promote the *"Global Safe Schools Initiative"* in the implementation of the **"Comprehensive Framework for School Safety."**

Six: To establish clear responsibilities and procedures for effective early warning systems (EWS).

➢ *Early warning is one of the most important pillars* within the disaster risk management system given the impact it has on saving lives. As the Sendai Framework acknowledges: "increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems..."

➢ It is essential to integrate *local early warning systems* into national systems, describing the roles, functions, and responsibilities of all those involved including *those at the end of the information chain*, to ensure that this information arrives in a timely manner and can thus save lives and livelihoods.

Seven: To strengthen and build regional and national coalitions to increase the scope of community resilience.

➢ In order to meet this priority *it is essential to strengthen the collaboration and coordination of civil society organizations* with their corresponding national and local governments. To do so, the Red Cross has developed the "IFRC Framework for Community Resilience" and the "One Billion Coalition for Resilience."

➢ Working through networks and coalitions strengthens the *comprehensive approaches to meet* people's demands and needs and increases the geographic scope, thus reaching all vulnerable communities.

➢ We acknowledge the *significant progress that sub-regional organizations* have made, with active participation from National Disaster Management Systems, in the development of frameworks for the collective harmonization of DRR processes and actions. Such has been the case with the Central American Policy for Integrated Risk Management (PCGIR), as well as the Caribbean Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy (CDMS), which *establish effective guidelines for both regional and national preparedness* in building community and institutional resilience.

Eight: Strengthening the frameworks is a necessity for the effective attainment of Risk Reduction.

➢ Normative frameworks, through their effective application, are *crucial to generate and sustain resilience*, being key tools to provide an adequate environment for DRR.

➢ As a response to the commitment adopted in the Sendai Framework, the IFRC, together with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), have developed the tool: *"Checklist on Law and DRR."* National Societies in the Americas encourage States to revise regional and national legislative frameworks in light of this tool, ensure that their legislation reflects DRR as a priority.

Nine: To promote investments aimed at increasing the impact of the DRR agenda.

➢ **To generate strategic alliances between the public and private sector** to strengthen community resilience.

➢ To promote investments that enhance knowledge, process innovation and sustainability, **ensuring their placement** so that the funds are used as a complement and catalyst for local investments and resources.

➢ To ensure the development of accountability and transparency systems.

In view of the above, *we urge Governments to adopt the points outlined in the Montreal Regional Plan* in order to achieve consistency with the 4 priorities of the Sendai Framework for Action and thereby strengthen the resilience of local communities and authorities in the Americas.

Given in Montreal on the 7 day of March, 2017.