

## **The Havana Consensus**

*On Disaster Risk Reduction in the Greater Caribbean  
June 3, 2005, Havana Cuba*

**13 Members of the Association of Caribbean States, the United Nations System, the Red Cross and CDERA, met at the “Seminar Workshop for National Authorities: Risk Management Policies, Systems and Experiences in the Caribbean” held in, Havana, Cuba from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2005 as a regional effort to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action within an international strategy for disaster reduction. The meeting had the sponsorship of the United Kingdom, Turkey and the United Nations System, in particular UNDP and OCHA.**

**The meeting aimed at a) developing training on risk and disaster management, strengthening exchange and cooperation and developing further alliances among the countries and institutions of the region with support from the United Nations, Cooperation Agencies and other regional initiatives for the purpose of improving national capabilities to reduce the impact of natural hazards; and, b) improving the integration of the international disaster response and response preparedness efforts into the national and regional disaster coordination mechanisms and procedures, in preparation to the 2005 Caribbean hurricane season**

**Recalling the Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA) adopted at the Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in Kobe, Japan on January 2005, the Kingston Declaration and lessons learned from the 2004 hurricane season and other recent major events;**

**The Participants recognise that numerous countries in the region are particularly vulnerable to the effects of hazards while others are more resourceful (or are better prepared and are ready to offer all possible cooperation. While calling for increased support among themselves and through bilateral, multilateral, regional and international cooperation, the Participants recognise that the key factor to reduce vulnerability and enhance disaster preparedness and response is the level of national political commitment and allocation of national resources.**

**The Participants affirm their will to increase efforts to implement the policies, strategies and mechanisms necessary for including both a bottom up and a top down approach to disaster risk reduction as an essential requirement in all public and private initiatives in development and humanitarian strategies at all levels and call for the support of the United Nations System in this process.**

**The Participants recognize, within the greater Caribbean, the need to enhance the exchange of information on hazard risk reduction, lessons learned and best practices, and to this effect the Association of the Caribbean States represent an appropriate forum to support these efforts.**

**The Participants welcome the initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN/ISDR Secretariat to establish a Cross Cultural Network for Disaster Risk Reduction based in Cuba to facilitate the exchange of experiences on disaster reduction among the English, Spanish, Dutch and French speaking countries and agree that this network be made available as a platform for capturing and sharing lessons learned and best practices among the ACS Countries to contribute to the implementation of the HFA.**

**Within this context, the Government of Cuba, as the host country, agrees to share through this network its experiences and good practices on disaster risk reduction and increase the cooperation across the greater Caribbean community.**

**In the face of disasters, the Participants agree that the UN Agencies under the leadership of OCHA engage with ACS Members who in accordance with their respective national policies, when they request it, and through the UN Resident Coordinator System along with other regional organizations, ACS Members, Donors and the Agencies develop a regional coordination mechanism for disaster response and preparedness for ACS Members.**

**In light of the Lessons Learned from the 2004 hurricane season and other major events in 2005, the Participants recognise that increased efforts and a more proactive approach at all levels is needed to implement the building code against earthquake and hurricanes developed by the ACS and to adopt prevention measures to reduce the negative impact of natural disasters in the greater Caribbean. In particular, the participants recognise the need to strengthen the regional capacities of institutions dealing with vulnerabilities to development to reduce the impact of natural hazards.**

**The Participants also acknowledged the urgent need to strengthen regional capacities for early recovery planning and programming, during the aftermath of a disaster, which effectively integrate risk reduction into the recovery process and prevents the reconstruction at pre-disaster levels. In this regard, the meeting agrees that the Members with support from the UN and its partners in the International Recovery Platform, should in the aftermath of disasters, develop national recovery policies, frameworks and programs aimed at reducing future risk and building a solid foundation for sustained socio-economic development.**

**The Participants recognise that two or more Members can be impacted by a single event, as seen during the 2004 hurricane season and the recent major events of 2005. Consequently, they acknowledge the need to support the strengthening of regional**

disaster response mechanisms and capacities as well as those of the UN, so as to being able to respond effectively to various events simultaneously.

They also agreed to work closely with disaster risk reduction agencies at all levels to initiate the development of a regional pool of recovery experts to function as surge capacity to support national recovery efforts in the greater Caribbean and to facilitate the integration of risk reduction initiatives in the recovery and reconstruction projects supported by the national governments, international and donor community.

The Participants reiterate that one of the persistent problems facing the Greater Caribbean, is the weak capacity to effectively reduce disaster risk, in particular, among Caribbean SIDS. Following the Mauritius Declaration the meeting further reaffirms the urgent need for increased support for tertiary level programs which integrates relevant risk reduction and climate adaptation issues into ongoing development approaches and models currently being taught at Universities in the Greater Caribbean.

The meeting recognises with regret the disproportionate levels of human and economic loss incurred in Haiti and Grenada from natural hazard impacts and the great losses incurred within several highly vulnerable communities across the Greater Caribbean from the 2004 hurricane season and other major events in 2005. In recognition of this and within the context of the Hyogo Framework of Action, which makes an international call for the development of people-centered early warning systems, the meeting calls on the international community and the ACS membership to support activities geared toward strengthening the resilience and coping mechanisms of these vulnerable communities through the development of effective people centered early warning systems, integrated public health measures and the retrofitting of critical facilities to make them more resistant to seismic activities and hurricanes.

The meeting acknowledges the work of the UN-ECLAC in rapidly facilitating the quantification of the losses and the effects incurred during the 2004 hurricane season and other major events in 2005 on planned development initiatives. In addition, the meeting underscored the linkage between reducing disaster risk and the achievement of sustainable development, in particular, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), and recognises the challenges faced by the region in transferring this thinking into national development plans. The Participants propose to the UN the pursuit of MDG indicators specific to disaster response and recovery. It is also proposed to maintain the efforts to incorporate the national planning and financial entities in the risk management programming.

Taking into account the Hyogo Framework of Action and the Kingston Declaration the Participants identified the following strategic priority actions to be considered within a short term period:

**1. Strengthen the capacities for prevention and preparedness:**

- **Install Early Warning System beginning with the most vulnerable communities.**
- **Conduct local risk studies and vulnerability assessments.**
- **Promote the access to and technical assistance for the use of Geographic Information Systems.**
- **Integration of disaster risk reduction measures and adaptation to climate change into development planning.**
- **Creation of risk management centers.**
- **Conduct evacuation drills and simulation exercises**
- **Promote public awareness, community preparedness and education campaigns focusing on vulnerable communities and groups**
- **Promote the security of sanitary infrastructure in a multisectoral approach**
- **Strengthening national systems for disaster reduction including multisectoral national platforms.**
- **Strengthening data collection analysis and statistical capacity for evidence based planning and policy making.**
- **Disaster management sensitive budgeting**

**2. Strengthen the capacities for response and recovery:**

- **Improved capacity building for decision making**
- **Develop budgets for rehabilitation and recovery**
- **Improve the disaster damage and need assessment collection, coordination and dissemination**
- **Develop response and recovery plans, tools and human resource capacity**
- **Promote the development and improvement of disaster management legislation**

**3. Strengthening of strategic alliances and partnerships:**

- **Improved coordination between international agencies, private sector and donors**
- **Increase the mobilization of technical and financial resources**

**Development and update contingency plans for natural disasters**

**The Participants agree to bring the present Consensus to the attention of the Ministerial Council and to the Special Committee on Natural Disasters of the ACS and requested the Secretariat to prepare a report to this effect.**

**The Participants express sincere appreciation and gratitude to the people and Government of Cuba for hosting this important workshop and look forward to the holding of the VII International Congress on Disaster Reduction in Havana in June 2006 and pledge on this occasion to report back on the progress achieved towards the implementation of the strategic priority actions of the Havana Consensus.**