

## **Opening Remarks by BCPR's Deputy Director Mr. James W. Rawley**

Latin America and the Caribbean Crisis Prevention and Recovery Workshop

Bogotá, Colombia. March 27, 2006

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### **Welcome**

1. Estamos muy felices de poder estar aquí con ustedes en este maravilloso país, celebrando el primer Seminario de Prevención de Crisis y Recuperación de Desastres para América Latina y el Caribe. Quisiera en este sentido agradecer ante todo la hospitalidad y el apoyo de la oficina del PNUD en Colombia. Sin duda, este evento ha sido posible gracias a la estrecha colaboración con cada una de las oficinas de campo, al igual como con el Buro para América Latina y el Caribe, y el SURF de Panamá.
2. Si bien hay muchas caras que puedo reconocer, permítanme presentarme para aquellos que aun no he tenido la oportunidad de conocer. Mi nombre es James Rawley y soy el Director Adjunto del Buro de Prevención y recuperación de Desastres del PNUD.
3. Sin duda alguna, y como ya han mencionado mis colegas Bruno y Martín. Este evento representa una oportunidad única para la región. Esta es la primera vez en la cual un importante grupo de expertos y colegas latinoamericanos y caribeños se reúnen para discutir, aprender e intercambiar experiencias y perspectivas sobre lo que implica trabajar en la prevención y recuperación de conflictos y desastres.
4. El simple hecho de que toda esta experticia y potencial de conocimiento se concentre en un evento de esta magnitud, marca una ocasión muy especial. Esperamos que este ejercicio sirva para impulsar el inicio de una nueva era de cooperación e intercambio de experiencias en una región que ha sido tan afligida por crisis, ya sean desastres naturales o conflictos violentos.
5. En este sentido, es importante mencionar de que somos conscientes de que el tema que aquí nos convoca, no es un tema nuevo para la región. Por el contrario reconocemos los esfuerzos extraordinarios que las diferentes oficinas de campo y sus contrapartes han desplegado para recuperar sus democracias, fortalecer sus instituciones y crear las capacidades necesarias para afrontar las múltiples dimensiones de crisis a las que muchos de sus países han estado expuestos.

### **BCPR and its work on Crisis Prevention and Recovery**

6. In the last decade, natural disasters and civil strife have become commonplace in many developing countries, forcing back the process of change, eroding hard-won development gains, and in some cases adding another huge obstacle in the path of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
7. The accumulated losses from these disasters are concentrated disproportionately in the most vulnerable sectors of the poorest countries. 24

- of the 50 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) face high levels of disaster risk, with at least 6 of these countries being affected by 2 to 8 major disasters per year in the last 15 years.
8. Although the overall number of violent conflicts has declined since 1991, there have been nearly 60 major armed conflicts worldwide since the end of the Cold War. Moreover, security risks have shifted towards poorer countries.
  9. With around 80 of UNDP's 166 country offices currently involved in activities relating to conflict prevention, peace building, natural disasters, and other crisis-related issues, it became clear that the mainstay UNDP services in Democratic Governance and Pro-Poor Policy and their programmes needed greater relevance, different prioritizing, and new partnerships in crisis and post-conflict countries.
  10. This development made Crisis Prevention and Recovery a rapidly growing area of work for UNDP, and in recent years UNDP has defined Crisis Prevention and Recovery as one of its key priorities, establishing CPR as a full-fledged practice area with a specialized Bureau.
  11. As our Assistant Administrator and Director of BCPR, Mrs Kathleen Cravero, has mentioned, **"UNDP colleagues working on CPR are the "crisis people" of long-term development.** We have a stake in several different "worlds" – the humanitarian, the political and the developmental, to name just three. Our home base in UNDP gives us a special vantage point, as the advocate for countries that might otherwise get left behind; as the champions of MDGs in near-impossible situations".
  12. In this regard, the role of UNDP in crisis and post conflict situations is limited to addressing the development dimensions of these situations. This development focus draws upon and supports the broader mission of UNDP to promote human development and the achievement of the MDGs.
  13. As part of its most immediate challenges, BCPR has identified its unique role in:
    - working with government partners to reduce or mitigate the risk of disaster and conflict
    - helping governments recover from the effect of disasters and conflicts
    - creating a secure environment in which development can flourish
  14. As an organizing principle, BCPR has identified two outcome areas for our work, namely:
    - **Prevention and Risk Reduction:**
      - Promoting conflict-sensitive/risk-management approaches to development
      - Building the capacities of regional, national and local institutions to reduce conflict and disaster risk
      - Facilitating and convening to build consensus

- **Recovery:**
  - Supporting governments to undertake needs assessments and prepare recovery plans and programmes
  - Putting governments in the “driver’s seat” and enhancing “core functions” of government in recovery settings
  - Supporting programming in key areas that do not obviously fall within the competencies of other UN and non-UN partners, including community-based recovery programmes and emergency employment initiatives

### **The CPR Practice Area and Latin America**

15. As Martin has so eloquently expressed, Latin America and the Caribbean is today exposed to multiple challenges that threaten both peace and development. These challenges range from weak democratic institutions that reduce the effectiveness and efficiency of government response to crises to limited capacities at the local and national capacities to manage and prevent these crises from unfolding.
16. UNDP has responded to these challenges and during the past few years it has up scaled its technical assistance and support to the region, not only by providing a range of expertise in many CPR areas, but also by strengthening our knowledge services and our resource mobilization strategies. Since 2003 for example, UNDPs central funding mechanisms on CPR have provided seed funding to address prevention and recovery needs in an amount over USD 13,000,000 benefiting almost every single country of the region.
17. This support has taken a number of forms, including support for: natural risk reduction initiatives that reduce vulnerability to future natural hazards; conflict prevention programmes that promote consensus building and integrate a conflict sensitive approach in UN and national programmes; recovery support to countries emerging from complex emergencies; and emergency grants to help the Resident Coordinator exercise his or her coordination functions in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster.

### **Closing Remarks**

18. In closing allow me to mention that we in BCPR are currently in the process of fine tuning our CPR strategy and undertaking a change management process to ensure the alignment of our staffing structure and resources in accordance with this refocused strategy. We will soon be sharing the results of this internal process with the regional bureaus while also continuing to listen carefully to the emerging CPR needs at the regional and country levels. Indeed, we look forward to engaging in a formal dialogue with Martin and his colleagues on this subject in May.
19. In this regard, we very much see this workshop as part of our ongoing dialogue with the LAC region and as an opportunity to exchange views on important

issues and challenges in CPR. We are very excited about this workshop and about the work you will be doing in the days to come. For BCPR, the wider CPR family of UNDP – namely all UNDP colleagues working on disasters and conflict issues - is a very important community and we are pleased to see that this community is coming together to jointly address the challenges of this region. For us, it is very important to see that the CPR Practice is growing and that we build and strengthen a critical mass of UNDP people with expertise and experience in these issues.

20. I wish us all a successful four days of discussions and lively exchange in the working groups. I hope that by the end of our work together we in BCPR and you in the front lines in the Country Offices will find ourselves more knowledgeable and better equipped to tackle specific CPR challenges in the countries we serve.