

ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS)

ACS HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON DISASTER REDUCTION

Saint-Marc, Republic of Haiti, 14-16 November 2007

PLAN OF ACTION

The Ministers and other high-level Heads of Delegation of ACS Members represented in this Conference on Disaster Reduction;

- i. **Recalling** the acknowledgement by the 4th ACS Summit of Heads of State/Government, held in Panama City in July 2005, of the vulnerability of our countries to disasters and their negative impact on our efforts to ensure sustainable development, and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals with respect to poverty reduction and environmental sustainability; as well as the Hyogo Framework of Action;*
- ii. **Recognising** that the primary goal of disaster risk reduction is the safeguard of the lives of human beings, the protection of their means of subsistence and those of the local economy, as well as the environment;*
- iii. **Taking into account** that building greater resilience is a necessity given the grave consequences that its absence would have for the survival, dignity and livelihood, especially of the poor and other vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly and the disabled;*
- iv. **Convinced** that the best way to reduce vulnerability to disasters is to integrate disaster risk reduction and adaptation to climate change into sustainable and safe development policies and plans at all levels of government and that mainstreaming these concerns into planning and practice is a complex issue requiring close cross-cutting cooperation among all stakeholders;*
- v. **Mindful** of the constant need for disaster risk assessment and monitoring of achievements on disaster risk reduction;*
- vi. **Cognisant** of the wealth of initiatives in the Greater Caribbean regarding disaster risk reduction and of the need to develop a regional strategy to avoid duplication, overlapping and paralleling;*
- vii. **Reaffirming** the importance of the role that existing regional organizations play in disaster management, coordination and cooperation as enshrined in articles 4 and 9 of the Agreement between Member States and Associated Members of the ACS for Regional Cooperation on Natural Disasters;*
- viii. **Acknowledging** that the Member States of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency, who are also Member States of the ACS have agreed on and are implementing the revised Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) Strategy and Programming Framework 2007 – 2012, which is the regional group's strategy for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals,*

the Hyogo Framework of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for the further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

- ix. **Recognising** the important role played by national efforts in risk reduction and disaster response and reaffirming the importance of international co-operation, particularly at the regional level, in order to strengthen existing national and regional efforts, as well as bodies dedicated both to disaster risk reduction and recovery processes;
- x. **Reaffirming** the need for free and timely access by developing and least developed countries, as part of the technical cooperation, to the technology required to reduce disaster risks and mitigate their effects in the event they occur;
- xi. **Emphasising** the importance of coordination and cooperation in matters of mutual interest between the ACS and the other international and regional disaster risk reduction organisations participating in this Conference (henceforth, Conference Bodies)¹;
- xii. **Recalling** the commitment of our countries' policy and decision-makers to implement the Hyogo Framework of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for the further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States;
- xiii. **Reaffirming** that the ACS represents a solid platform to promote synergies and cooperation in the large geopolitical space of the Greater Caribbean, based on exchange of different experiences, lessons learnt from past events, and existing sub-regional technical institutions in the field of disaster response and risk reduction;
- xiv. **Taking** into account the negative impacts that disasters can have on the application of the strategy for establishing sustainable tourism in the Region;

Approve the following Plan of Action, which will guide the work of the Association of Caribbean States for the next 5 years, as the body for consultation, cooperation and concerted action for disaster risk reduction in the Greater Caribbean. To this effect the Association of Caribbean States shall:

1. Strengthen its role as the principal forum in the Greater Caribbean for the exchange of experiences, lessons learnt and best practices in the development of national and regional coordination mechanisms.
2. Provide assistance to the Greater Caribbean Region in cooperation with the Conference Bodies, to develop strategies with a view to evaluating regional progress towards achieving the objectives and priorities adopted through the Hyogo Framework of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for the further

¹ Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency, Coordination Centre for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Inter-American Development Bank, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Pan American Health Organisation, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

3. Encourage and contribute, as appropriate, to the establishment or strengthening of the national platforms model advocated by the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and their linkages to the Global Platform.
4. Encourage and contribute, as appropriate, to the integration of disaster risk reduction into humanitarian and sustainable and safe development planning, programmes and frameworks, including the poverty reduction strategic frameworks.
5. Encourage and contribute, as appropriate, to Members' integration of all disaster risk reduction actions with climate change strategies, such as measures surrounding adaptation to climate change.
6. Encourage and contribute to the integration of gender as a cross-cutting concern into disaster risk reduction policies, plans and actions in the Greater Caribbean.
7. Contribute to the continuous exchange between the Conference Bodies, international cooperation bodies, the ministries in charge of planning and finance, as well as organisations specializing in disaster risk reduction.
8. To support the formulation of policies and the strengthening of networks among disaster risk experts, technical and scientific specialists, planners and other stakeholders.
9. To provide assistance, as appropriate, at the regional, national and local levels, in collaboration with the Conference Bodies, in the development and strengthening of community-based disaster risk management programmes.
10. Strengthen its capacity to link Members to existing disaster risk reduction initiatives of the Conference Bodies.
11. Promote the synergies between the Hyogo Framework of Action and international mechanisms related to Small Island Developing States including the Convention on Climate Change and the Mauritius Strategy for the further Implementation of Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States as instruments that will strengthen national capacities for reducing the effects of disasters, the development and improvement of early warning and technology transfer systems, and for identifying the vulnerability of territories and human settlements.
12. Promote, in collaboration with the Conference Bodies, the conduction of baseline assessments on the regional and national status of disaster risk reduction and their documentation and publication.
13. Contribute, in collaboration with the relevant Conference Bodies, to the development of risk assessment indicators to assist States in tracking their progress towards implementation of the Hyogo Framework of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for the further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

14. Encourage and contribute to the exchange of national experiences in introducing disaster risk reduction subject matter in educational activities at all levels (primary, secondary, university, academic and scientific) as well as formal and non-formal training activities.
15. Encourage and contribute to the development and revision of curricular material for formal and non-formal educational sectors in collaboration with established national and regional institutions.
16. Encourage and contribute to the strengthening of the regional capacity of cultural and scientific communities to create and improve the early warning systems in the region.
17. Encourage and contribute to engage the media and information and communication technology entities in developing educational activities aimed at increasing knowledge about disaster risk reduction with the support of the scientific community, while creating and strengthening early-warning systems.
18. Continue its work in the establishment and improvements of building codes to assist Member countries of the ACS in ensuring that public and private facilities are more resilient to the impacts of disasters.
19. Encourage and contribute to the development of disaster risk reduction strategies, even their transfer through appropriate financial and investment mechanisms, including insurances, to enable ACS Member Countries to cope with post-disaster needs of the most vulnerable groups and public infrastructure.
20. Encourage and strengthen, where appropriate, the implementation of land management and land use plans with provisions for the location and the relocation of communities away from hazard-prone areas.
21. Advocate, as appropriate, the protection of forests and wetlands, as well as the restoration of degraded ecosystems, thereby improving and safeguarding the resilience of the environment and biodiversity.
22. Continue initiatives to assist Member countries in the establishment of national pre- and post-disaster funds to support prevention, disaster response and recovery, and reconstruction without reproduction of risk.
23. Work toward the mobilisation of resources, to be drawn from the international donor community, for the creation of a regional fund for the financing of disaster risk reduction activities, including those intended for adaptation to climate change.
24. Work toward the mobilisation of resources, to be drawn from the international donor community, for the financing of the initiatives contained in this Plan of Action.
25. Continue to expand the network of international and regional bodies for consultation, cooperation and concerted action without detriment to the relationship with the Conference Bodies.
26. Continue to promote the Agreement among the Member States and Associate Members of the Association of Caribbean States for Regional Co-operation on

Natural Disasters, with the objective that it may enter into force by 2008 at the latest.

27. To encourage the Member States of the ACS to continue with the efforts in safeguarding and protecting the historical, cultural, and natural heritage, reducing the impacts of disasters.

Evaluate the implementation of this Plan of Action. The Special Committee on Natural Disasters will submit an annual report to the Council of Ministers.